THE

Pulpit Orator

CONTAINING SEVEN ELABORATE SKELETON SERMONS,

OR,

HOMILETIC, DOGMATICAL, LITURGICAL, SYMBOLICAL,
AND MORAL SKETCHES,

FOR EVERY SUNDAY OF THE YEAR.

ALSO ELABORATE SKELETON SERMONS

FOR THE CHIEF FESTIVALS AND OTHER OCCASIONS.

BY THE REV. JOHN EVANGELIST ZOLLNER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN, WITH PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR, AND ADAPTED BY

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GENERAL INDEX.

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THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

Lesson.—*Proverbs* 8: 22-35. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything, from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old, before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived; neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out: the mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established: before the hills I was brought forth: he had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the world. When, he prepared the heavens, I was present; when with a certain law and compass he enclosed the depths: when he established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters: when he compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits: when he balanced the foundations of the earth: I was with him, forming all things; and was delighted every day, playing before him at all times; playing in the world: and my delights were to be with the children of men. Now therefore, ye children, hear me: Blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors. He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord.

Gospel.—*Luke* 1: 26-28. At that time: The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou amongst women.

FIRST SKETCH

Hail, full of grace.—Luke **1:28.**

"Behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did **my** mother conceive me."—*Ps.* 50: 7. With David all of us must acknowledge this, for being descendants of Adam and Eve, who transgressed the law of God, we are contaminated with, conceived and born in, original sin. There is only one of the whole human race, who was never defiled by original sin, Mary the Virgin Mother of God. She was conceived without stain, *i. e.,* from the very instant of her conception, by a special grace of God, she was perfectly free from original sin. It was this pious belief that Pope Pius IX., on the 8th day of December, 1854, defined as an article of the faith, in the following words: "We define the doctrine which holds the Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception to have been preserved from all stain of original sin, by the singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, and through the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, to be a doctrine revealed by God, and therefore to **be** firmly and constantly held by all the faithful." This article **of** the faith shall be the subject of our meditation to day.

That Mary was conceived without original sin, is evident—

I. From the Sacred Scriptures;
II. From tradition;
HI. From reason.

Part L

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception of **the Blessed** Virgin Mary is founded on the Sacred Scriptures.

i. *I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel*— *Gen.* 3:15. God spoke these words to the serpent, that is, to the devil, who had seduced our first parents. The woman here mentioned is the Blessed Virgin Mary. Of her it is said that she shall crush the serpent's head, that is, completely overcome the devil. Since every one who is contaminated by a single sin, be it original or actual, is under the bondage of the devil, it follows that the Blessed Virgin Mary must have been free from all sin, original as well as actual, otherwise she would have been overcome by Satan, and it could not be said of her that she crushed his head. Thus we find the dogma of the Immaculate

Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary enunciated in the very first pages of the Sacred Scriptures.

2. *Hail, full of grace.—Luke* i: 28. Why does Gabriel say that Mary is *full of grace?* Certainly not because she already possessed the fulness of grace; for with all her holiness she was after all only a human creature, consequently capable of an increase in grace so long as she lived upon earth, and like all the just she really did increase in grace. The Archangel, therefore, could salute her as *full of grace* only in this sense, that she was never deprived of sanctifying grace, consequently conceived without original sin.

3. *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways.—Prov. 8: 22.* In their proper sense, these words refer to the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, to the Son of God, and signify that God the Father has always been in God the Son, and God the Son always in God the Father, as St. John also says (1: 1): "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But the Church applies these words in their figurative sense to the Blessed Virgin, thereby intimating that she was never defiled by original sin. Consequently, if God possessed her in the beginning, in the first moment of her existence, and she therefore belonged wholly to him, what follows from this but that she was never under the dominion of the devil, and was, consequently, preserved from every sin and especially from original sin? Again, if the Lord possessed Mary in the beginning of *his* ways, namely, the ways of grace and mercy, by which he would come to us as our Redeemer, what was more becoming than that she should preserve her from original sin? If she had ever been the slave of the devil even for a moment, how could we believe that God would have chosen her for the mother of him who came to free men from the slavery of Satan? Hence St. Thomas of Aquin says: "Mary would not have been fit to become the mother of the Redeemer, if she had been defiled by any sin."

4. *Thou art all fair, O my love; and there is not a spot in thee.—Cant.* 7. In these words, which the Church also applies to the Blessed Virgin, her Immaculate Conception is expressed. When God calls her his love we must justly conclude that she was always pure and spotless, therefore, also free from original sin. Moreover the Lord says of her that she was all fair and without spot, which certainly would not have been the case, if she had **at** any time been contaminated by original sin. From these, and any others passages which could be quoted, it is evident that Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin.

Part II.

Tradition also gives testimony to the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

1. *The Fathers of the Church.* *Origen* says that Mary was not breathed upon by the breath of the poisoned serpent, hereby confessing that the Blessed Mother of God has remained intact from all sin, original as well as actual. *St. Amphilogius,* bishop of Iconia in the fourth century, says that God formed the Blessed Virgin without stain or sin, herein very clearly declaring that Mary was never defiled by original sin. *St. Ambrose* says: "This (Mary) is the rod, on which was neither the knot of original sin, nor the bark of actual sin." *St. Augustine* rejects the heresy of Pelagius who asserted that the children of baptized parents were without original sin, and says that all children, whether they have baptized or unbaptized parents, are conceived in original sin, but excepts Mary, adding: "The Blessed Virgin alone is excepted; of whom, when there is a question of sin, I do not wish any mention to be made on account of the honor of our Lord." St. Cyril, of Alexandria, writes: Excepting him who was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her by whom the God-man was brought into the world, we are all born in original sin.

2. *The Councils.* The Council of Basle, in the year 1493, decreed: "The doctrine that the Virgin Mother of God, by a special, anticipating and effectual grace, was never subject to original sin, but that she was always preserved from original as well as from actual sin, holy and undefiled, we pronounce a pious doctrine corresponding with the Catholic faith, Sacred Scripture and reason, which must be approved of, held and received by all Christians, and we declare, that for the future no one is allowed to preach or to teach the contrary." The Council of Trent also declares, that it does not intend to include in its decree on original sin the Blessed and Immaculate Mary, Mother of God. In these words the Council makes it plainly understood that it acknowledged the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

3. *The Roman Pontiffs.* They permitted entire kingdoms and states to choose the Blessed Virgin for their patroness, under the title of the Immaculate Conception; they approved of religious Orders and Confraternities being established in honor of it and of monasteries, churches and altars being erected under this title; they commended those who obliged themselves by an oath to defend the Immaculate Conception, and they permitted the word "Immaculate" to be added to the word "Conception" in the preface of the mass. On the other hand they resisted the op-

posite opinion. Pope Pius II. prohibited the assertion that Mary was conceived in original sin. Alexander VI. imposed punishments on those who in any way would dare to speak or write against the doctrine or feast of the Immaculate Conception, and prohibited all books containing anything against this dogma. Clement VIII. made the Feast a Greater Double; Clement IX. added an Octave; Clement XI. made it a Holiday of Obligation; **Leo** XIII. raised it to a Double of the **First Class.**

Part **JU.**

Reason, enlightened by revelation, also furnishes us with very convincing arguments for this article of the faith that Mary was conceived without original sin. Let us consider a few of them.

1. Mary became, as it were, as the throne of God; she was the incomparable palace in which the Son of God chose to dwell for nine months, for it was from her he assumed his human nature. Now, as everything that comes in contact with God, even externally, must be pure and undefiled, what purity was not demanded for that vessel in which the Son of God himself was to form his flesh and blood. Truly, if Mary had been contaminated by a stain of sin, it would have obscured his splendor on account of the intimate union into which God entered with her, whilst her Immaculate Conception is a magnificent testimony to his own holiness. Hence St. Alphonsus says: "If the Blessed Virgin had been conceived in sin, it would have been a disgrace for her Son (although he could not have become a sharer in the stain of sin) to have united himself so intimately with a womb which had been contaminated with the guilt of sin, an impure vessel and a subject of the devil."

2. The Blessed Virgin, after her Son, has the largest share in the work of redemption. With her, as it were, the work of redemption begins; she is the Aurora. It is difficult to comprehend how purification from sin could have begun in sin itself. Through the Immaculate Conception of Mary we can understand how we can call her the mother of mercy, our life and our hope; for if she is without original sin, she is truly the beginning of salvation, because in her our nature is re-created; thus it is plain how she participated so largely in the work of our redemption; thus does she deserve to assume a species of mediation between God and man, and thus also does she really appear as the one between whom and Satan enmities have been set, as the one who has crushed the serpent's head.

3. If a son on earth could choose a mother for himself according to his liking, would he not prefer a queen to a slave? St. Bernard says: "As the Son of God could choose as his mother her who pleased him best, we may be assured that he would choose such a one as was becoming a God; and since it became God to have a mother free from the guilt of sin, he chose such a one for his mother." We must therefore conclude that the Blessed Virgin remained free not only from every actual, but also from original sin, for otherwise she would not have been a fit mother for Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

4. Our first parents according to the flesh are Adam and Eve. Our progenitors according to grace are Christ and Mary. Mary represents Eve, however, in so far as Eve received the natural life from Adam, whereas Mary received the life of grace from Christ. Now, if the second Adam, *i. e.,* Christ, is far above the first, must we not also admit a corresponding relation between Mary and Eve? Eve was originally pure and spotless: is it possible that the conception of the second Eve was less pure and spotless? Should Mary, who in merits stands far above Eve, be less in dignity? We must therefore say: Mary, when conceived, could not be less pure, less perfect than Eve, when created; at her creation Eve was immaculate, therefore in her conception the Blessed Virgin was necessarily immaculate.

5. It is a belief founded even on antiquity that not only the soul but also the body of Mary was assumed into heaven after her death. This corresponded with her high dignity' and great merits, but the chief and most important reason of her bodily assumption into heaven we must seek in her Immaculate Conception. In consequence of the first sin man is subject to death and decay. But the Blessed Virgin being exempt from the stain of original sin, was, on that very account exempt from corruption, and immediately after her death she was received body and soul into heaven.

PERORATION.

Thus the Sacred Scriptures, tradition, and even reason, give testimony to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Hold firmly to this truth and confess with heart and mouth: "Yes, Mary, Mother of God, we as Catholics believe that thou wast preserved from the stain of original sin by a special grace of God, and wast in the possession of sanctifying grace in the first moment of thy existence." With a grateful heart recall to mind your baptism, in which a few hours after your birth you were

freed from oricinal sin and sanctified, and preserve this baptismal grace with the greatest solicitude, as Mary preserved the grace of her Immaculate Conception. If you have lost it, or in the future should be so unfortunate as to lose it, bring forth fruits worthy of penance in order to recover it. Place yourself daily under the protection of the Immaculate Mother of God, and say to her: "*O* Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us, who have recourse to thee." Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND THEIR SIGNIFICATION.

Thou art all fair, O my love; and there is not a spot in thee.—Cant. 4:7.

We have a number of representations of the Blessed Virgin which vividly recall to our mind the various events of her life, and the extraordinary favors of which she was the recipient.

Mary is both a virgin and a mother, and as such is most generally represented. As a virgin she has usually a lily in her hand, for the lily is the emblem of virginal purity. As a mother she appears always with the divine Infant on her arm, and frequently with the sceptre, the sign of her royal dignity; for, as mother of God, she is the Queen of Angels and Saints. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary is also pictorially represented. When you see an image or picture of the Blessed Virgin robed in a white garment, with a blue mantle over her shoulders, standing on a crescent, the serpent under her feet, whose head she is crushing, you know that it is a representation of the Immaculate Conception. Let us look at this image or picture of Mary whose Immaculate Conception we celebrate to-day, and consider the lessons and truths which it represents. Let us consider her as she is represented:

I. In a white garment and a blue mantle over her shoulders;
II Standing on a crescent;
III. Under her feet the serpent whose head she is crushing.

Part I.

Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, conceived without original •in, is represented:

Z *In a while garment.*

(a.) White is the emblem of innocence, for which reason **a** white garment is given to children after baptism. The white garment in the representation of the Blessed Virgin signifies the innocence and holiness with which she was adorned from the very first instant of her conception. According to the decree of God she was to become a second, better Eve, to repair the misery which the first Eve brought upon all mankind. Since Eve, the mother of the fallen human race, came forth from the hand of her Creator pure and spotless, who could doubt that Mary, the mother of the regenerated race, was conceived without stain of sin? Mary was to become the Mother of God; how, then, was it possible for the Son of God, who is holiness itself, to take his human nature from a mother who was ever defiled by sin? Mary was to conceive the Son of God by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost.—*Luke* i : 35. How is it possible to believe that the Holy Ghost would have accomplished in Mary such a wonderful work as the Incarnation of the Son of God, if she had not always been pure and spotless? Mary, therefore, was conceived without original sin, and to her, from the first moment of her conception, can be applied the words of the Holy Ghost: "Thou art all fair, O my love; and there is not a spot in thee." We are reminded of this dogma by the white garment.

(λ) We are conceived and born in original sin; but we were so fortunate as to be spiritually regenerated, purified and sanctified by baptism. Oh. that we all would value this grace, give thanks to God for it daily, and preserve it with the greatest solicitude. Catholic parents, frequently remind your children of the white garment of their baptism, explain to them its signification and repeat to them the words which the priest says in presenting it to them: "Receive this white garment, and see thou carry it without stain before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life." Oh, that all who have soiled their baptismal robe by sin would cleanse it without delay in the Sacrament of Penance.

- *II. In a blue mantle.*

(a.) Blue is the color of the firmament of heaven; the blue mantle therefore signifies the heavenly aspirations of the Blessed Virgin. Mary lived upon earth and conscientiously fulfilled the duties of her state of life, but her heart was in heaven ; she constantly walked in the presence of God, and was unceasingly occupied in the affairs of her salvation ; therefore St. Bernardine says of her that she continually preserved her heart in the **fire of divine love.**

(Æ.) How different is the conduct of many Catholics. They live in continual distraction and in entire forgetfulness of God and their salvation; they are ever occupied with temporal and even sinful things, and while at church are full of worldly cares. How foolish to think always of what is fleeting and of no value at the hour of death; and to neglect what is alone important and necessary: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?"—21/^8:36. Never lose sight of your vocation, your eternal destiny. Recollect yourselves frequently during your work and turn to God by pious aspirations.

III. In a blue mantle over the white robe.

(a.) This also is significant. As the mantle covers the dress and preserves it from being soiled and damaged, so to converse in the presence of God is the best protection for innocence and virtue. Mary preserved during her whole life the innocence and holiness with which she was adorned even in the first moment of her conception; she never defiled her angelically pure soul with the least stain of sin, for she wore over her white robe of innocence the protecting mantle which enabled her to walk in the presence of God, to have God always before her eyes, to meditate on the truths of salvation, and to breathe forth fervent prayers to heaven.

(3.) Over the white garment of virtue we also must wear this mantle which will enable us to live in the presence of God. Forgetfulness of God is the reason why so many live in sin, have no room in their hearts for salutary thoughts and neglect prayer; hence they indulge their sinful lusts and without any scruple violate the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church. Above all thingstake care to walk in the presence of God. "This practice," says St. Francis of Sales, "you must make use of as your daily bread, for as you eat bread with all kinds of food, so the practice of living in the presence of God must accompany all your actions, because no other is so useful as this."

Part II.

Mary is represented as standing on a crescent.

i. The moon is the emblem of inconstancy, for it is ever changing; at one time it is "New", then "First quarter", "Fullmoon" and "Last quarter".

(0.) Mary's position above the crescent is indicative of her constancy, her unwavering fidelity to God. She served her Lord in

every situation of life with the same devotedness, and **nothing** could make her waver in her fidelity. Her infancy, her youth, her maternity, her widowhood were consecrated to God; the most severe trials, the most poignant sufferings fell to her lot, but she did not deviate from the right path; she knew no other joy than that in God, cherished no other wish than to please him, had no other desire than to love him and to be eternally united with him. Examples of her fidelity and constancy. As a child she made the vow of virginal chastity and resolved rather to renounce the dignity of the Divine Maternity than to break her vow. She did not abandon Jesus in his sufferings and death, but stood beneath the cross to the last.

(3.) How humiliating for many Catholics is this constancy of the Blessed Virgin. So long as everything goes well and no trial has to be endured, they are disciples cf Christ and fulfil his will. But how differently they act when their fidelity is put to the test. Do they not resemble the disciples in the Garden of Olives who, when Christ was apprehended, cowardly fled? How often have they not succumbed to temptations, to anger, impurity, gluttony and avarice? How often have they not broken the good resolutions which they made at their confession or on other occasions? How often have they not, from fear and human respect, and from various worldly considerations, gone against their conscience and neglected their religious and other duties? Oh, that all would take to heart the words of Christ: "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven."—*Luke* g : 62. Oh, that we would never forget that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; and the violent bear it away."—*Matt.* 11: 12.

2. The crescent on which Mary stands signifies also the power of *the Turks which was destroyed through her.* A crescent was the original coat of arms of the city of Constantinople, which the Turks after the capture of that city retained; they still consider it as the emblem of their empire, which like the increasing moon was to extend itself over the whole earth.

{ai) The Turks waged war against the Christians for more than a thousand years, they conquered one Christian country after another, and were about to bring Austria under their dominion, but by invocation of the Blessed Virgin the Christians achieved such great victories at Lepanto, Temesvar and Vienna, that the power of the Turk was destroyed for ever, so that now the Turkish empire owes its miserable existence only to the grace, or rather to the mutual jealousy, of the great powers of Europe.

(Æ.) We all must fight against the Turks who endeavor to deprive us not only of our temporal, but also of our eternal country. You know these Turks; they are the world, the flesh and the devil. Like the Christians in their combats with the Turks, we must in our struggles with the enemies of our salvation, have recourse to Mary; she will take us under her protection and assist us in conquering them. It was revealed to St. Brigit that God has given the Blessed Virgin such great power over the evil spirits that whenever they attack one who loves Mary, and invokes her aid, the least sign on her part suffices to put them to flight, for they will rather suffer double pains than the disgrace of having to succumb to the power of Mary. Therefore, St. John Damascene, full of joy and consolation, exclaims: "O holy Mother of God, I hope for salvation because I have an invincible weapon in thee. Yes, courageously will I pursue my enemies, when I have thy assistance and thy help as a shield in my hands."

Part III.

Mary has under her feet the serpent, whose head she is crushing.

1. This representation reminds us of the words spoken by God to the serpent: " I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."—*Gen.* 3: 15. Mary had already crushed the serpent's head at her conception, that is, she had conquered the devil by not being contaminated with the stain of original sin through a special grace of God. When therefore we see Mary represented crushing the head of the serpent, the truth of our faith in her Immaculate Conception is expressed. It also refers to her as Mother of God, for as such she has likewise crushed the serpent's head. She has brought forth Jesus Christ, who has destroyed the kingdom of Satan and redeemed mankind from his slavery. Mary continues to crush the serpent's head, for she protects the Church against the gates of hell and frustrates all the wicked designs of the evil one. If we peruse the history of the past and the annals of the Church we shall find that through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin evils of every sort have been averted, storms calmed, and internal and external enemies conquered. If we travel through the Christian world we shall ever find monuments which give evidence of the graces and benefits which have been imparted to Christendom through the mediation of Mary. And the feasts which are celebrated throughout the year in her honor, are they not manifestations of gratitude to the Queen of Heaven for the miraculous delivery of Christian nations on several occasions from the invasion of bar-

barians, the oppression of infidels, schisms, wars and other great calamities?

2. You are aware that in our days the powers of hell wage a terrible war against the Church and labor indefatigably for her destruction. You know that our holy Father the Pope is still deprived of his lawful possessions, and endures great afflictions; you know how unbelief and godlessness in many countries triumph over justice and truth. In this time of great trial let us have recourse to prayer, and beseech Mary to show herself the protectress of our holy Catholic Church and frustrate all the designs of her enemies. Make also the pecuniary sacrifices which the good cause demands, and cheerfully give your mite when there is a question of promoting the welfare of the Church. You would be deserving of the greatest reproach were you to make common cause with the enemies of the Church, besides causing the loss of your own soul, for "if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17. Be good, obedient children of your mother; honor, love and obey her, and live as good Catholics, that you may have the consolation of a happy death.

PERORATION.

I have now explained to you the signification of the pictorial representation of the Immaculate Conception. Observe what this representation teaches you. The white robe should be an admonition to you to preserve the garment of sanctifying grace as your most precious treasure and never soil it by the least sin. The blue mantle should urge you to have God always before your mind. The moon, on which Mary stands, should remind you to walk constantly in the path of virtue, and to serve God with equal fidelity in prosperity as well as in adversity. And Mary crushing the serpent's head should admonish you to make the resolution, confiding in God's grace and in the protection of Mary, to fight against Satan and his associates with determination and perseverance, that the words of the Lord may be fulfilled in you: "Be thou faithful until death and I will give thee the crown of life."—*Apoc. 2:* 10. Amen.

THIRD SKETCH.

ACCORDING TO THE EXAMPLE OF MARY, WE SHOULD PRESERVE AND INCREASE THE GRACE OF GOD.

Hail, full of grace.—Luke 1:28.

This festival reminds us of the article of the faith of the Holy Catholic Church that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, was conceived without the stain of original sin. Whilst all men are conceived as children of wrath Mary was a child of grace from the first moment of her existence, therefore the words of the angel, "Hail, full of grace" are applicable to her even in her conception. On account of her intimate connection with Jesus Christ, the **Son** of God, and on account of the divine love which he bears to his mother, we must admit that in the very first instant of her conception she received a greater measure of grace than all the angels and saints. Therefore a celebrated theologian (Suarez) says: "Mary obtained more prerogatives and graces in the very first instant of her conception than all the saints, ye more than all the choirs of angels, because she was more beloved by God than all the saints and angelic spirits. But during her whole life Mary preserved and increased with the greatest solicitude the graces which God so liberally imparted to her at her conception." Herein she is a model for us, for we should also be solicitous not only to preserve but to increase the grace received in baptism. Let us then look up to Mary the Immaculate Virgin and Mother of God, and consider how, according to **her example,** we **should—**

I. Preserve, and
II. Increase the grace of God.

Part I.

Mary preserved inviolate throughout her life the sanctifying grace received from God in the very instant of her conception. She never committed the least venial sin, and when she died she was as pure and spotless as on the day of her conception. To her are applicable the words of Holy Writ: "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee."—*Cant.* 4: 7. The question, therefore, arises: What means did she employ to preserve this grace? I answer, the three following, viz., *solitude, work* and *prayer.*

1. Mary loved *solitude* above all things, and retired from the world as much as possible. While still a child she was brought

by her parents to the temple at Jerusalem, there to spend the first years of her life away from the tumult of the world. In that sacred abode, among innocent children and chaste virgins, where she was instructed in the law of God and trained in every virtue, where she worked and prayed, she laid the foundation of that wonderful sanctity which rejoiced heaven and earth. Arrived at maidenhood, she returned to Nazareth, according to the will of her parents, and there also she withdrew as much as possible from the world. The house of her parents and the synagogue, where she listened to the word of God and practiced her devotions, were to her the dearest places; elsewhere she was never found, unless called by obedience or love for her neighbor. When the Archangel Gabriel came to bring her the message that she was chosen by God to become the mother of his Son, where did he find her? Not in the streets or public places; not in the society of frivolous persons, or at an entertainment, but in solitude in her little chamber, occupied in pious meditations. We read in the gospel that having conceived of the Holy Ghost she visited her cousin Elizabeth. She did this, not from vanity or from the desire of mingling with the world, but only to congratulate her cousin on the grace she had received, and to render her some service. The Evangelist expressly remarks that she went into

people on the way. When Jesus began his public life traveling through the country of the Jews, teaching and conferring benefits everywhere, Mary during most of the time lived in complete solitude, and after the Ascension of Christ the rest of her days were spent in entire seclusion from the world.

If you, like Mary, wish to preserve grace, you must, like her, lead a retired life. He that has much to do with the world and participates in its amusements, is in danger of losing his good principles, of forfeiting his innocence and virtue, and of going astray. "A saint among worldly people," says Origen, "a pure man among the impure, a pious, good man among the wicked, is as rare as an emerald in the dirt, or a pearl in the sand." "As often as I have heen amongst men, I have returned less a man." —*Seneca, Epis. η.* "This we often experience when we talk long. It is easier to be altogether silent, than not to exceed in words. It is easier to keep retired at home, than to be able to be sufficiently upon one's guard abroad."—*Imit. of Christ, Book* i, *chap.* 20. Numerous examples from history prove how dangerous is intercourse with the world. So long as the descendants of pious Seth lived separated from the descendants of wicked Cain, they served God and lived in innocence; but so soon as they came in contact with them and lived with themthey forgot God and became as wicked as their seducers, so that God saw himself compelled

to destroy them by the deluge. So it is to-day. Association with frivolous, irreligious and vicious persons is for numerous persons, especially for inexperienced young people, a rock on which their innocence is wrecked. If you wish to preserve the grace of God you must take Mary for your model and like her lead a retired life. See to it, Catholic parents, that your children prefer to remain at home, and do not allow them to associate with frivolous people and persons of the opposite sex, or to visit places where there is no fear of God. Piety and virtue thrive only in the shade of solitude; therefore St. Chrysostom designates it as the root of the vine without which the vine dies; as the source from which the water springs which refreshes all the plants in the garden, as a defence and a weapon from which the devil flees.

2. Mary was *industrious;* she performed all her domestic duties with indefatigable zeal. Her position in life required her to work; for although she was a descendant of the royal house of David, she was in straitened circumstances and obliged to support herself by manual labour. She labored, however, not merely from necessity, but because she deemed work to be a duty for everyone as well as an excellent promoter of virtue. To her may be applied what is said of the strong woman in the book of Proverbs: 'She hath sought wool and flax, and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands . . . She hath risen in the night and given a prey to her household ... She hath girded her loins with strength and hath strengthened her arm . . . Her lamp shall not be put out in the night."—31: 13-18. Herein, again, you must take Mary for your model, since an industrious, active life is an effectual means of obtaining grace. A man who works diligently closes the entrance of his heart to the tempter. The devil cannot fill his imagination with pictures of effeminacy and luxuriousness, because his attention is occupied with business; he does not hear the suggestions of Satan. Hence St. Jerome says: "Work always, that the devil may find you occupied, for he who is engaged in an honorable business is not easily surprised by him." In earnest occupation every passion is silent. Work banishes sinful thoughts, extinguishes the fire of concupiscence, bridles the dissipation of the senses, and keeps the mind in salutary recollection. On the contrary, idleness is the fruitful source of sin. So long as Samson was occupied he retained his strength, but when he was deluded by Delila, he lost his power. What was the cause of David's fall? Idleness. So long as he was engaged in war he was chaste and just; but when idle in his palace, he committed two great crimes. The same as regards Solomon. So long as he was busily engaged in building the temple, he excelled all others in his wisdom and fear of God, but when he was unoccupied and enjoyed rest, so low did he fall that he built tern-

pies to idols, and offered sacrifices to them. Yes, idleness is the root of all evil. Therefore, shun it, be always occupied, not only to obtain a livelihood, but to strengthen yourself in the service of God, and to preserve grace.

3. How zealous was Mary in the exercises of *devotion and prayer.* As we have heard, she spent the years of her childhood in the temple at Jerusalem, where she daily devoted several hours to prayer. She prayed, as she herself revealed to her cousin Elizabeth, at three different times of the day, and even rose at night to adore God before the altar of the temple. As the gospel informs us, she made with Joseph the long and tedious journey to Jerusalem every year, there to celebrate the feast of the Pasch. After the Ascension of Christ she went with the Apostles into the upper chamber at Jerusalem, and persevered with them in prayer for ten days,—until the descent of the Holy Ghost.—*Acts* i : 13, 14. The last years of her life were entirely devoted to prayer and meditation. She was always interiorly recollected, and if she did not pray orally, she did mentally, hence, we can with justice say that she prayed without ceasing. Therefore Albert the Great says that next to Jesus Mary practiced prayer more perfectly than all others who have ever lived or ever will live. In her fervor at prayer we must also imitate Mary, for like her we must preserve sanctifying grace. So long as we live we must endure temptations; at one time it is the devil, at another the world, and again, our own concupiscence which entices us to sin and endeavors to make us fall. Now, it is certain that we cannot overcome these temptations, especially when they attack us with violence, and continue to withstand them for any length of time, by our own strength; we need the grace of God to do it. It is equally certain that God imparts to us the first graces to do good without prayer, but that the other graces by which we are enabled to accomplish and to persevere therein, depend on prayer; therefore we must pray if we wish to overcome temptations and to remain faithful to God. Hence, St. Thomas of Aquin says: "After baptism incessant prayer is necessary to man that he may arrive at the joys of heaven, for although sins are remitted by baptism, there remains the allurement to them, which combats us from within; and the world and the devil, attacking us from without." In order to be saved we must struggle and conquer. Without the assistance of God we cannot obtain the mastery over so many and such powerful enemies. This divine assistance is obtained only by prayer, consequently, *without prayer there is no salvation.* It was because the Apostles did not obey the injunction of their Master: "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation" *{Matt.* 26: 41), but yielded to sleep, that they succumbed to the temptation, and like cowards

fled, leaving- him alone. To persevere in prayer is most necessary. St. Augustine says: "God, it is true, imparts special graces, such as the first dawning of faith, without their being petitioned for; but he gives other graces, especially the gift of final perseverance, only to those that ask him." Therefore, pray with persevering fervor, let no day pass without saying your morning and evening prayers; pray when you rise, pray when you wash, when you go to your work, when you return home, and before going to bed. Make your work pray for you. Pray always and faint not. By so doing, you will not only preserve sanctifying grace, but also increase it.

Part II.

i. With the same zeal with which we must preserve sanctifying grace we must also be solicitous to increase the same. Herein again Mary goes before us with a good example. To her may be applied what is said of Jesus in the gospel: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men."—*Luke* 2: 52. She possessed the plenitude of grace at the very first moment of her life, but as every one so long as he lives upon earth is capable of an increase of grace, so was Mary. She increased in grace far more than all the saints of God, and to her may be applied the words of the Holy Ghost: "Many daughters have gathered together riches; thou hast surpassed them all."—*Frov.* 31: 29. Swift is the flight of a cannon ball, for it passes over three miles in a minute, but far more rapid is the motion of light, for in one second it makes its way from pole to pole. The reason of this extraordinary velocity is that light in its course meets with no obstacle, whilst the cannon ball in its flight is impeded by the air. A similar difference exists between Mary and the saints. Although the saints were full of zeal, yet they could not progress in the path of virtue as rapidly as they desired, for their course was in various ways impeded by the concupiscence dwelling in man in consequence of original sin. It was different with the Blessed Virgin. Not being contaminated with original sin, and consequently free from concupiscence, she had no interior obstacle in the way to hinder her growth in holiness. Hence, without any exaggeration, we may say that in one day she made more progress in sanctity than all the other saints during the whole course of their lives. Add to this, that in the Sacred Heart of Mary there was not the least spark of inordinate self-love or love of the world, but she gave all her affections and her entire self to God. It was love that urged her to do everything which she knew to be pleasing to God, that made her indefatigable in the exercise of good and meritorious works. Now since every merit receives an increase of grace, it follows that

the number of graces which Mary acquired cannot be computed. Finally, as Mary on account of her most perfect love referred all she did to God, every, even the most insignificant, action, word, look, breath, step, was a new merit, and consequently, a further increase of grace. The Fathers and spiritual writers are therefore right when they call Mary *a sea of graces^ for* as we cannot say how many drops of water there are in the sea, so we are unable to count the graces which Mary has acquired.

I. We too should consider it our most important duty to progress in virtue more and more, and thus to increase sanctifying grace. It would be a great error to believe that one can remain stationary and that it is not necessary to increase the grace once received by zeal in doing good. He who acts according to this principle exposes himself to the danger of losing the grace which he possesses and of plunging himself into everlasting perdition. The holy Fathers and spiritual writers unanimously agree that one begins to retrograde on the path of virtue as soon as one is no longer anxious to progress, and that the treasure of grace imperceptibly decreases when one no longer endeavors to augment it. Suppose you have ten thousand dollars; if you leave the money unemployed, cease working and add nothing to it because you earn nothing, but take some of the money every day to defray your expenses, will not your ten thousand dollars decrease until presently nothing is left? Thus persons who yield to tepidity and do not endeavor to progress in virtue will go backward and fall little by little into grievous sins. Therefore St. Augustine says: "Not to advance on the spiritual road is to retrograde." St. Gregory very appropriately explains this by a parable. He says: "He who lies down in a little boat on a river and does not endeavor to row against the stream, but wishes to remain at rest without going up or down, will necessarily drift downward, because the current will carry him downward." We all resemble sailors on a river, for on account of original sin concupiscence is within us, which renders it very difficult to serve God. If we do not manfully move forward and endeavor to become better day by day, the violence of our evil concupiscence will drive us downward and plunge us into sin and perdition. Blessed Henry Suso saw in a vision a high mountain, the summit of which reached to the stars; on this mountain were nine rocks, each of which was more or less inhabited. These nine rocks signify the nine degrees of perfection, which we with the grace of God can attain. Whilst Henry was admiring the high mountain with its nine rocks, he saw himself suddenly translated to the summit of the first rock ; thence he overlooked the whole earth which was covered with a great net. Astonished at this sight, he turned to our Lord, and begged that he would explain to him the signifi

cation of the net. Our Lord said to him that the net signified the sins and vices in which the devil holds captive the children of the world. Henry then asked who they were who stood beside him on the rock. Our Saviour replied that they were the lukewarm who do not endeavor to become more perfect, but are satisfied with not committing mortal sins. Henry again asked whether these people would be saved. Our Saviour replied: "If they die without having a mortal sin on their conscience they will be saved; but they are in greater danger than they imagine, for being tepid it is scarcely possible for them to persevere to the end in the grace of God." Meanwhile, Henry observed to his terror that many fell from the rock and were entangled in the net of Satan. He asked our Lord for an explanation of this, and Christ said to him: "They who consent to a mortal sin cannot stand on this rock, and as they are lukewarm they easily fall and are entangled in the net of Satan, to their perdition."

Above all things therefore guard against lukewarmness; never say: I am pious enough, I need not become any better. Such language would be altogether contrary to the will of God, and would expose you to the great danger of falling into sin, and of perishing eternally. Follow rather the admonition of the Lord: "He that is just, let him be justified still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still."—*Apoc.* 22: 11. Endeavor to correct the mistakes you have made heretofore, to subdue all inordinate passions, and to lay aside all evil habits. Practice virtue and good works with persevering fervor, mortify yourself interiorly and exteriorly, fulfil your religious and other duties, do all for the love of God and bear sufferings and afflictions with patience and resignation to the will of God. If you do this you will make progress in Christian perfection, you will daily increase in grace and store up a great treasure of merits for heaven.

PERORATION.

I conclude my discourse with the oft-repeated admonition: Take Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, for your model, and imitate her. She preserved the grace given her during her whole life, by loving solitude, work and prayer. Make use also of these means that you may persevere in virtue and preserve grace; avoid all unnecessary distractions, live a retired life, and practice prayer. Mary made daily progress in holiness and continually increased sanctifying grace. Do the same; strive daily to become more virtuous, and thus increase the grace of God. Such is the will of Christ, for he says: "Be you perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."—*Matt.* 5: 48. Blessed are you, if

in such a way you imitate the Blessed Virgin and not only preserve grace but also increase it; God will reward you as his good and faithful servants with the joys of heaven. Amen.

FOURTH SKETCH.

MARY, CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN.

From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed; for he that is mighty hath done great things to me.—Luke 1:48.

This is the expression of Mary's gratitude; this is the acknowledgment which she makes in her profound humility. Casting a glance into the future, and illuminated by a prophetic light, Mary sees that in the whole world temples will be erected and dedicated to her; that festivals will be celebrated in her honor, and that her praises will resound from the pulpits. This wonderful grace of predilection makes a most profound impression upon her, and inspired by the Holy Spirit she exclaims: "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed; for he that is mighty hath done great things to me." In contemplating so many prodigies of mercy and grace Mary does not give the glory to herself but to God: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour." She acknowledges that the Lord has done great things to her: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me;" she confesses that God has chosen her as the object of his pleasure: "He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid." Let us contribute our share towards the accomplishment of Mary's prophecy. We call her blessed and proclaim that God has done great things to her. Let us make it our duty to announce her glory and to refute the impious assertions of the wicked who maintain that she was not, as we profess, conceived without sin, consequently, that God has done less for her than we believe. That Mary, whose festival we celebrate to-day, was immaculate in her conception is a dogma of the faith to which we unflinchingly adhere, and in corroboration thereof I adduce the following facts:

I. The great things which God has done to Mary must convince us that he wished her conception to be immaculate.

II. The great things which God has done to Mary, induced men, whose memory shozdd be sacred to us, to believe and to teach the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Part I.

Call to mind what the prophets foretold of Mary, and reflect whether a child of wrath could have been announced in such a manner; consider the high purpose which God wished to carry out through Mary, and you will be able to judge if sin could possibly be the corner-stone of such a holy edifice; meditate upon the teachings of men of holy memory concerning the immaculate conception and you will be convinced that not a shadow of doubt can exist as to her conception being immaculate; moreover, that it is an intentional and mali ous spirit of opposition to dispute the existence of a grace to which many and serious reasons give striking evidence.

i. More than four thousand years before Mary was born she was foretold by the prophets; they beheld her in their visions and spoke of her with raptures in their sacred songs. Scarcely had the serpent seduced the companion of the first man when the Lord declared that a strong woman should crush his head; that there should be enmity between it and the woman. Who is that strong woman that crushed the serpent's head and thus triumphed over hell? It is the Virgin whose festival we celebrate to-day; it is Mary.

2. In the midst of enemies who surrounded the holy city, amidst a people plunged in fear and consternation, Isaias is consoled and consoles Juda. For the L(rd in a vision showed him a virgin who should conceive and bring forth a son. This son should be called God with us, the Admirable, the Prince of Peace, the Father of the world to come. The prophet in rapturous joy exclaims: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son." Who is that virgin whom the Lord makes known so far in advance of her birth, in order to awaken a desire in the hearts of the people? It is the virgin whose festival we celebrate to day,; it is Mary.

3. The royal prophet in writing the history of future ages gives a description of a queen wearing a glorious crown and sitting at the right of God. Her garment glitters like the purest of gold, but her interior excels it in brilliancy. In a most miraculous manner she is the daughter of the Eternal Father, the Mother of the Eternal Son, and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. Who is this queen who stands in such an intimate and glorious relationship with God? It is Mary.

4. Shall I here mention the heroines of the Old Law who were **figures and types of what Mary is in reality? Esther, who saved**

the people of God from the fury of Aman: Judith, who was the glory of Israel and the terror of the Assyrians: Debora, who destroyed the enemies of the people of God? Shall I call to your mind those wonderful phenomena which were so many symbols of what was to be accomplished in Alary, the burning bush that was not consumed, the fleece which remained dry, whilst there was dew on all the ground?—*Judg.* 6: 40.

Now let me ask you: if before the Christian era a commentator on the Sacred Scriptures had united all these prophecies into one, if he had explained them in the same way as I have; if he had convinced you of the obligation of their being understood in this sense and no other, and if, in conclusion, he had added: This daughter of Sion, who apparently was so dear to God, was originally hated by him, the Lord did not possess her from the beginning of her days, for she was in the power of the devil, she was cursed before he blessed her, in a word, she was hated by her God, unworthy of seeing him, much less of dwelling in his sanctuary, she was a child of wrath and deserved condemnation; if he had spoken thus could any one have reconciled these conclusions with those naturally drawn from the prophecies? Could he have convinced you that she whom the Lord caused to be announced by so many prophecies long before her coming could enter into this world in such disgrace? But if, on the contrary, this commentator, after quoting all the passages which I have enumerated had said: This daughter of Sion was dear to the Lord from the very beginning; it is an impossibility that he who lavished his benedictions upon her should for a moment have hated her, and she cannot have been even for an instant in the power of the devil; she must have been conceived without sin, and God must have showered his choicest blessings upon her even in her mother's womb; you would certainly have freely assented to this opinion, you would have found that it accorded with the prophecies, and in the whole relationship existing between God and Mary you would have discovered a plan and a purpose. Without this the beautiful picture would be defective.

But let us pass over to the other proofs. The sceptre is taken from Juda, the seventy weeks are passed, the last of the four great empires is at an end, in order to make room for that new kingdom which is to rise on their ruins and to exist for ever. The whole world is at peace, the sword and the lance are converted into ploughshares, and spears into sickles, everything indicates that the desired of nations, the expectation of the people, the Holy of Holies will come and choose a mother among the daughters of Eve. God will choose a mother for himself. In what part of the universe? And who is the blessed one? Nazareth, happy city, the angel of the Lord will appear within thy walls and say to the virgin whom we honor to-day: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord

is with thee: Blessed art thou amongst women."—*Luke* i: 28. "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shall bring forth a Son ; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father: and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."—*Luke* 1: 31-33.

This virgin whom we contemplate with such love and reverential awe is destined to be the Mother of God! Mother of God? Can this idea be connected with anything humiliating or disgraceful? Can we imagine that God would allow her to be even for a moment the slave of the devil? Can any man of common sense believe that God would allow the temple in which he chose to dwell to be defiled by the least blemish? Would it not be blasphemy to say that the Mother of God was born in sin, a slave of the devil, an enemy to God? Good Catholics have always, from the very beginning believed that Mary was conceived without sin. Let us now see what those men, whose authority must be sacred to us, have taught concerning the conception of Mary.

Part II.

i. St. Ephraim says: "Mary, the Mother of God, was immaculate; she was a child of God from the moment of her conception. The Lord possessed her from the beginning of her days." Amphilochius says: "God, who created her, preserved her from perdition. He would not permit sin to approach that tabernacle nor to enter into that sanctuary." And St. Augustine says: "When there is a question of sin, let no one be so wicked as to mention Mary." I know that in this passage he speaks of actual sin, and when he wishes no one to mention Mary when there is a question of venial sin, which does not deprive us of the grace of God nor close the portals of heaven against us, would he be likely to say that she was defiled by original sin which excludes sanctifying grace, renders us odious to God, slaves of the devil, and unworthy of heaven? Certainly not. She was free from the least stain of sin. This has been the pious belief of the Church at all times, even before it was an article of the faith.

Yes, Mary was conceived without sin. I behold in spirit how the Lord said to her in the instant of her conception: This law is not made for thee, but for all others; the poisonous breath of the serpent shall not infect thee, the monster shall have no power over thee, thou shalt trample him under thy feet and crush his head.— Original sin, like the deluge, covers the face of the whole earth and destroys all its inhabitants. Mary alone is in **the saving ark of the grace of God. What a grace! and for what**

purpose? In order to lay the foundation of that resemblance which should exist between her and her Son in all things. As he had been foretold by the prophets, sowas she; as he could defy his enemies to convince him of sin, so could she challenge hers in like manner. He sacrificed himself; she prepared the victim. To complete this resemblance it was necessary that she should be convinced without sin, as he had been convinced by the Holy Ghost. Is God not almighty? Is anything impossible to him? Shall not his omnipotence be capable of exempting her from original sin, the universal curse of mankind ? Oh, that her enemies could but understand it, and exclaim: Yes, Alary was conceived without sin.

2.1 shall not speak of our conception in conjunction with that of Mary, for such a comparison would be too humiliating for us, but I shall compare it to that glorious conception, namely, our regeneration by baptism, for therein I perceive a consoling resemblance. Mary never was defiled by a stain of sin; we have been cleansed from it by the laver of water and the word of life. Mary never was a slave of the devil; by baptism we have been delivered from his servitude. Great is the grace we have received in baptism and for it we must be thankful. If he have not been grateful for it in the past, let us be so for the future. Oh, that the day of your regeneration by water and the Holy Ghost may be to you always a day of thanksgiving, and the place of your baptism one of devotion and prayer.

3. Mary was adorned with sanctifying grace from the moment of her conception; we receive sanctifying grace by baptism. The moment the water of regeneration was poured upon our heads the heavens were opened, the Holy Ghost descended upon every one of us, and it could be truly said of us: “Behold a beloved child of God, a child that is the object of God’s pleasure.” So long as God sees us in this sanctifying grace, he loves us with the tenderness of a father, and by every one of our actions in this state we merit a higher degree of glory. We should therefore love and cherish this treasure and guard it diligently.

4. But how many there are who preserve it only so long as they cannot lose it? Do you call this honoring sanctifying grace, if you exchange it for a vile pleasure, if you expose yourself to the danger of losing it, if you obstinately refuse to avoid the occasions of sin, occasions through which you have frequently lost it, after having just recovered it? Do you call it honoring sanctifying grace when, having lost it, you do not take the proper means of recovering it, or when you endeavor by snares and stratagems to make others lose it? Do you call it honoring sanctifying grace when you omit those works by which it can be increased, and

commit countless sins by which it is weakened? Mary did not act th'AS. She preserved sanctifying grace and increased it by fixing her affections entirely upon God.

PERORATION.

May she be our model in all our words and actions. We were born in sin, and are, without doubt, sinners still; let us ask her to intercede for us that we may be sinners no longer, that we may recover the sanctifying grace which we have forfeited, that from this moment we may preserve and increase it in such a manner as to become worthy of the inheritance promised to th· children of God. Amen.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

FIRST OR MIDNIGHT MASS.

Epistle.—*Titzes* 2: 11—15. Dearly beloved: the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works. These things speak, and exhort in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel.—*Luke* 2; 1—14. At that time: There went forth a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolment was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him up in swaddling-clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them; and the brightness of God shone round them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.

SECOND MASS.

Epistle.— *Cities* 3: 4—7. Dearly beloved; the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared: not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost, whom he hath poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by his grace, we may be heirs, according to hope, of life everlasting.

Gospel.—*Luke* 2: 15—20. At that time, the shepherds said one to another: Let us go over to Bethlehem: and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us. And they came with haste: and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in a manger. And seeing, they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child. And all that heard wondered; and at those things that were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

THIRD MASS.

Epistle.—*Hebrews* 1: 1—12. God who **at** sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world: who, being the brightness of his glory, and the figure of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, making purgation of sins, sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high: being made so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels hath he said at any time: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again: I will be to him **a** Father; and be shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, he saith: And let all the angels of God adore him. And to the angels indeed he saith: He that maketh his angels spirits; and his ministers a flame of fire. But to the Son, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of justice is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And: Thou, in the beginning, O Lord, didst found the earth: and the works of thy hands are the heavens. They shall perish but

thou shalt continue; and they shall all grow old as a garment: And as a vesture shalt thou change them; and they shall be changed: but thou art the self-same and thy years shall not fail.

Gospel.—*John* i: 1—14. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him: and without him was made nothing that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men: and the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to give testimony of the light, that all men might believe through him. He was not the light, but was to give testimony of the light. That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own; and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them he gave power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name. Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us: and we saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

FIRST SKETCH.

TWO CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

She broughtforth herfirst-born son, and wrapped him up ***in*** *siaaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.—Luke* 2: 7.

"The feast of the gracious birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. From the year 5199 after the creation of the world, when God in the beginning created heaven and earth, 2957 from the deluge, 2015 from the birth of Abraham, 1510 from Moses and the exodus of the children of Israel out of Egypt, 1032 from the anointment of David as king, in the 65th week, according to the prophecy of Daniel, in the 194th Olympiad, in the 752nd year after the building of the city of Rome, and the 42nd of the reign of the Emperor Augustus, when there was peace throughout the whole world, in the sixth age, Jesus Christ, Eternal God, Son of the Eternal Father, when he would sanctify the world by his most blessed advent, was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and nine months after his conception was born at Bethlehem, Juda, of Mary the Virgin, and became man." With these solemn words

the Church announces the birth of Jesus Christ in the Roman iMartyrology. In this announcement two particular circumstances are mentioned, which deserve our attention, and which we will consider to day for our instruction and edification, namely:

I. The time, and
II. The place of his birth.

Part I.

I. The nativity of Christ falls within /Λ* *time foretold by the prophets.*

(a.) The patriarch Jacob mentioned the time of the coming of the Redeemer, when he said: "The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till he comes that is to be sent, and he shall be the expectation of nations."—*Gen.* 49: 10. According to this prophecy the Redeemer was to come when the sceptre had departed from Juda, *i. e.,* when the Jews, having lost their independence, were no longer governed by a king from the tribe of Juda. This prophecy has been fulfilled in Christ, for when he was born the Jews were under the dominion of the Roman emperor. Herod, who had only the title of a king, was not a descendant of Juda, but an Idumean. The Jews themselves acknowledged that they had no king, for they said to Pilate: "We have no king but Caesar."—*John* **19: 15.**

(b.) The prophet Daniel mentions even th- year in which the Messias would appear and accomplish the work of redemption. The archangel Gabriel appeared and declared to him that from the time when, by the order of a king, Jerusalem and the temple should be rebuilt, to the public life of Christ, sixty-nine weeks of years, *i. e.,* four hundred and eighty-three years, should elapse; after which the Redeemer would be put to death and those who denied him would perish, and that a strange people with their leader would come and destroy Jerusalem with its temple; finally, that in the seventieth week, *i. e.,* after the death of the Redeemer, the sacrifices of the Old Law would cease and the kingdom of the Jews have an end.—*Dan.* 9: 22—27. This prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ to the very letter; for from the time when by the command of the Persian king, Artaxerxes, Jerusalem was rebuilt, to the time of the public life of Christ, exactly sixty-nine weeks of years, or four hundred and eighty-three years, elapsed. In the middle of the seventieth week of years, *i. e.,* after three years and a half, Christ died upon the cross: the Old Law ceased and the New began. After the seventieth week of years, *i. e.f* after four hundred and ninety years, the Romans under their

leader Titus destroyed Jerusalem and put an end to the Jewish kingdom. Thus Christ gave even at his birth a proof of his Divinity and dignity as the Messias, since he was born at the very time foretold by the prophets.

2. *Within the time of the enrolment of the whole world.* As we read in the second gospel of this festival, the Roman emperor Augustushadsentoutadecree that the whole world (the Romans at that time were the masters of nearly the whole known world' should be enrolled. This enrolment comprised two things: the number of the inhabitants, and the worldly possessions of each individual.

(a.) Here, again, the all-ruling providence of God visibly manifests itself. According to the prediction of the prophet Micheas (5: 2) the Saviour was to be bom in Bethlehem. Now Mary and Joseph lived at Nazareth, and had no occasion to repair to Bethlehem, which was a journey of several days' distance from Nazareth. and especially at a time when Alary was near her delivery. But behold, the Roman em eror without being aware of it co-operated with the designs of God, so that the prediction of the prophet might be fulfilled. Since the enrolment had to be made in the place to which a person's tribe belonged, and as Mary and Joseph were descendants of the royal house of David at Bethlehem, they were obliged to repair thither. Thus the emperor Augustus, a pagan, assisted unconsciously in bringing about the birth of Christ at Bethlehem. Let us recognize the wisdom of God which without the will and knowledge of men often interposes in their actions, and guides them according to his holy designs.

(b.) The birth of Christ, at the time of the enrolment of the whole world, teaches us that he came not only for the redemption of the Jews but also of the Gentiles, and therefore of all men. The Jews were of the opinion that to them alone, as the chosen people of God, all blessings and graces would be imparted. Even the Apostles were of this opinion, for it was necessary that Peter should be informed by means of a miraculous vision that the Gentiles also were to be made partakers of the blessed fruits of redemption. Let us to-day thank God with a grateful heart that he has called our pagan forefathers to Christianity and that cosequently we have inherited it from them, and let us prove ourselves worthy of this grace by a pious, Christian life. Let us take to heart the words of St. Peter : "If flying from the pollutions of the world through the kowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they again become entangled in them and overcome, their latter state is become unto them worse than th j former. For

it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than, after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them."—*IL Pet.* 2: 20, 21. Let us live so that Christ may not be for our ruin but for our resurrection.

3. *Within the time when there was peace throughout the whole world.* When Christ was born the temple of Janus was closed, in token that peace reigned throughout the whole Roman empire. Christ chose this time of universal peace—

(a.) To manifest himself at his very entrance into the world, as the *Prince of Peace* foretold by the prophets. Isaias calls him a prince of peace when he says: "A child is born to us; and a son is given to us; and the government is upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called . . . the Prince of Peace. His empire shall be multiplied; and there shall be no end of peace."—9: 6, 7. And Zacharias (9 : 10) says of him : "He shall speak peace to the Gentiles. And his power shall be from sea to sea, and from the rivers even to the end of earth." The angels also on the plains of Bethlehem announced him as the Prince of Peace when they sang: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will."—*Luke 2:* 14.

(p.) To indicate that he was come to bring peace to man; therefore, the Apostle says of him that he made "peace through the blood of his cross."—*Col.* 1: 20. He established *peace with God,* rendering satisfaction to him for our sins, reconciling us with him and recovering for us his grace and love; *peace with ourselves,* by taking away sin, the source of all discord, and meriting for us the grace to conquer our inordinate inclinations and passions, whereby we preserve interior peace; finally, *peace with our neighbor,* by uniting all men most intimately with one another through the bond of religion, and by giving them the commandment to love one another as brothers and sisters.

(ci) To show us that he loves peace above all things and rewards the peaceful both temporally and eternally. Therefore he said to his disciples: "Into whatsoever house you enter, first say: Peace be to this house: And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: but if not, it shall return to you."—*Luke* 10: 5, 6. Hence he also praised peacemakers, saying: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."—*Matt,* 5 : 9. How is it with you? Have you this peace which Jesus Christ brought to man? Are you at peace with God and with yourselves? Are you in a state of grace? Does Bot your conscience reproach you with sins of which you have

not perhaps truly repented, which you have not properly confessed and amended? Do you live in peace with your neighbor? Is there no aversion, hatred or enmity in your heart? If you do not possess this peace, endeavor to obtain it during this holy season of Christmas by making a good confession and being sincerely reconciled with your neighbor.

4. *Finally, in the night-time.* "While all things were in quiet silence and the night was in the midst of her course, thy almighty word leapt down from heaven from thy royal throne." Thus the Church exclaims according to the Book of Wisdom.—18: 14, 15. Before the birth of Christ men were "sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death."—*Luke* 1: 79. The Gentiles were sunk in the abomination of idolatry, and were so blinded that they worshipped the gods by murder, impurity and other vices. Even among the Jews many errors prevailed, their worship was for the most part only exterior, a shell without a kernel; therefore God says of them: "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips glorify me, but their heart is far from me."—*Is.* 29: 13. The birth of Christ at the hour of midnight symbolizes the night of error and sin in which men were languishing, and reminds us of the truth, that Jesus Christ is the light of the world, who is come to lead man back to the true knowledge and worship of God. Hence the prophet Isaias (9: 2) says: "The people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light: to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen." And St. John (1: 9) calls the divine Saviour "the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." Let us take to heart the words of the Apostle: "You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light."—*Ephes.* 5: 8. "Let us cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences."—*Rom.* 13: 12—14.

Part II.

Our Blessed Lord chose *Bethlehem* for his birth-place, a *stable* for his dwelling, and a *crib* for his bed.

1. *Bethlehem.* Why did Jesus wish to be born in Bethlehem?

(a.) First of all, in order to fulfil the prophecy of Micheas, who indicates Bethlehem as the birth-place of Christ in these words: "*And thou, Bethlehem,* Ephrata, art a little one among the thou-

sands of Juda: out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel."—*Mich.* 5: 2. The Jews understood this prophecy concerning Christ, for in answer to Herod's question where Christ was to be born, the Scribes immediately replied: „In Bethlehem," quoting the prophecy of Micheas.—*Matt.* 2:4—8. When, on one occasion, some declared Christ to be the promised Messias, others denied it, saying: "Doth not the Scripture say: That Christ cometh out of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the town where David was?"—*John* 7: 42. From this it follows that the Jews very distinctly recognized Bethlehem as the birthplace of the promised Messias. Now, if Christ had been bom elsewhre than at Bethlehem the Jews could have refused to believe in him, and with reason, because the prophecy of Micheas would not have been fulfilled in him.

(bi) To humble himself at his entrance into the world. Bethlehem was a small, insignificant village, scarcely numbering a thousand inhabitants, and therefore without renown in the eyes of the world. Christ wished to be born there to show us the way in which he would accomplish the work of redemption. It was pride that made man rufuse obedience to God and that plunged him into the deepest missery. Perdition has its origin in pride. Now in order to avert from man the ruin which pride had brought upon him, Jesus wished to humble himself most profoundly, and therefore to be born in Bethlehem. Hence the Apostle said of him: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross."—*Phil. 2*: 8. By the humility which he manifested even at his entrance into the world he wished to show us the manner in which we should appropriate to ourselves the fruits of redemption and work out our salvation. This is the way of humility, for he emphatically says: "Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 18:3. He even proposes himself as a model of humility and exhorts us to follow him, exclaiming: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls."—*Matt.* 11: 29. Let us be humble in heart, in word and in deed.

(f.) To be for us *what Bethlehem signifies, a house of bread.* Jesus Christ really is the true bread; for as earthly bread nourishes the body and strengthens and preserves life, so Jesus nourishes and strengthens our spirit through the Holy Spirit, and preserves in us the life of grace. Therefore he says himself: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me, shall not hunger."—*John* 6: 35. Jesus Christ is that wonderful bread which he gives us in the Most Holy Sacrament, as he again says: "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread.

he shall live for ever; and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."—*John* 6:51, 52. Thus the birth of Christ at Bethlehem is an invitation to us to visit Jesus frequently in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, to adore him most profoundly, and as often as possible and with a heart well prepared to receive him in holy communion.

2. *In a stable.* Why in a stable? *Because there was no room for them in the inn.—Luke* **1:** 7. Mary and Joseph arrive at Bethlehem, the day is drawing to a close and night approaches; they seek an inn; the town is full of people, it being the time of registration. There is no room for them at any of the inns; every place is occupied. How true are the words of St. John who says: "He came unto his own; and his own received him not."—*John* 1: ii. On this mysterious night he could scarcely find a place whereon to lay his head. But why could Mary and Joseph find no room in any of the inns of Bethlehem? Probably for two reasons.

(a.) *On account of their -poverty.* Mary and Joseph belonged to the class of artisans: their clothing, as well as their whole exterior, showed only too well that they were poor, unassuming people. They were therefore refused admission in a few, short words, for the lowliness of their appearance indicated plainly that no reward was likely to follow the offer of hospitality. The massacre of the children of Bethlehem may have been a punishment for this unmerciful conduct. If Jesus, Mary and Joseph came to you in their poverty to seek a shelter, would you act as did the inhabitants of Bethlehem? Certainly not, you think; you would receive them with pleasure and treat them in the best manner possible. Very well, but you know what Christ says: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me." And again: Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to me."—*Matt.* 25: 40, 45. If you assist poor, needy, and helpless people, you assist Jesus, and your reward will not fail, but if you hard-heartedly repel his poor from you, it is equivalent to rejecting Jesus, and a severe judgment awaits you.—*James* 2:13. Consider this and be merciful, that you may obtain mercy.

(J.) *On account of Mary*s condition, the time of her delivery being near.* Mary and Joseph sought a lodging from place to place Many might have been willing to grant their petition, but one glance at Mary immediately caused them to change their mind, for they feared she might be delivered while there and cause them inconvenience; therefore they refused them admission. For

a similar reason Jesus is refused admission by many in our day He demands many things which are unpleasant and disagreeable to human sensuality, such as self-denial and mortification of the flesh: " If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—*Matt.* 16: 24. This is too hard for a great many; they cannot resolve to mortify their inordinate lusts and passions, to give up bad company and to renounce this or that pleasure; they will not hear of imitating Christ. What blindness, on account of comparatively small and transient difficulties to renounce eternal salvation, and for fleeting pleasures to plunge oneself into eternal perdition?

3. *His bed a crib.* The new-born Saviour wished to be laid in a crib—

(a.) To verify the words of the prophet Isaias: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib."—*Is.* 1:3. St. Gregory the Great understood by the ox the Jewish people under the yoke of the law, and by the ass, the Gentiles, steeped in folly and idolatry. Jesus lying in the crib surrounded by an ox and an ass, signifies tl at he became man for the redemption of the Jews and the Gentiles, that is, of the whole human race. To apply the graces of redemption to all men, the Church at the present day, as she has done in every century, still sends missionaries into all parts of the world to announce the gospel to the Gentiles. Let us assist these messengers of the faith pecuniarily and by our prayers.

(<5.) To remind us of the words of the Psalmst (48: 13): "Man, when he was in honor did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them." In the course of time, man lowered himself beneath the level of the brutes, yielding like irrational animals to the desires of the flesh, losing all knowledge of God and all sense and feeling for nobler, higher things. Then it was that Christ appeared upon earth in order, by his doctrine, example and grace, to rescue man from his depravity, and to conduct him in the path of truth and virtue. Thus it happened that paganism with all its abominations and vices was vanquished, and the Christian religion with all its consoling truths and admirable virtues was spread over all the earth.

(ci) To teach us in particular that his kingdom, as he delared shortly before his death *(John* 18:36), was not of this world; and by his example to encourage us to value earthly goods as naught and to seek the things that are above. When a royal child is born a luxurious couch receives him; even for the child of the laborer a soft, warm bed is prepared; the birds too have nests; but Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, the Lord

of heaven and earth, lies in a crib on hay and straw. Could *he* have preached and inculcated his contempt of the world at his entrance into this mortal life in a more impressive manner? Let us consider what St.John says: "Love not the woild, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life: which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever."—*I. John 2** 15-17.

PERORATION.

In conclusion, I exhort you in the words of St. Francis of Assisi, who on the feast of Christmas once exclaimed to the people assembled around the crib: "Let us love the Child of Bethlehem, who, in order to win our hearts, has given us such great proofs of his love. Yes, let us love him, let us return love for love, boundless love for his infinite love." But let us manifest our love for Jesus in our actions, and constantly walk in the way of his commandments, as he himself says: "If you keep my command ments, you shall abide in my love."—*John* 15: 10. Let us offer ourselves to our Saviour in grateful love, without reserve and for ever, so that we can say always and with truth: "Jesus, I live for thee, Jesus, I die for thee, Jesus, I am thine in life and in death." Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

THE PEACE OF JESUS CHRIST.

***On** earth peace to men of good mill.—Luke 2:* **14.**

In this life there is nothing more delightful and desirable than peace. Croesus, one of the richest and most powerful kings of antiquity, once asked a philosopher this question: "Who, do you consider, is the happiest of men?" Great was his astonishment to find the philosopher did not acknowledge him, but a poor, unknown man, to be the happiest. "That poor man," said he, "is happier on his straw pallet, than thou, O king, on thy bed of down; for the angel of peace, who is far from thy throne, keeps watch at his couch." Such was the judgment of a pagan. And

St. Gregory of Nyssa says: "Whatever you may mention among things which are sweet and pleasant in life, peace is always necessary, in order that they may really be pleasant. For though you may have everything that is esteemed and valued in life, such as riches, health, joys, amusements and pleasures, what do all these things profit, when peace is wanting?" Where peace is wanting, the quietude of the heart, *i. e.t* contentment, is missing; and he who is destitute of contentment, is unhappy, though he may live amid the happiest surroundings. Hell would cease to be hell if peace were there; and heaven would no longer be heaven if peace were wanting. This great, this inestimable treasure, peace, the new born Saviour brought from heaven. Therefore, the angels, on the plains of Bethlehem, sang: *On earth peace to men of good will.* Of this peace I shall speak to you today and explain—

I. How manifold it is;
II. What is required of us for its preservation.

Part I.

The peace which Jesus brought from heaven is threefold.

i. *Peace with God.*

(a.) Our first parents sinned in paradise, and with them all men, excepting the Blessed Virgin Mary; their sin, as a sad inheritance, has been transmitted to all their descendants. "As by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death: so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned."—*Rom.* 5: 12. Original sin is also the source of numerous actual sins. There is scarcely a man living who has not sinned in many ways from the days of his infancy, therefore St. John says: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."—*I. John* i: 8. By sin, that is, by original as well as actual sin, we lose the peace of God; for sin is a disobedience, a rebellion against God, nay, a crucifixion of Christ; how, then, can the sinner have peace with God? "Who hath resisted him (God) and hath had peace?"— *Job* 9: 4.

(bl) To regain peace with God satisfaction must be made for the offense committed; but this satisfaction can be made neither by angels nor by men, for sin being an offense against God is an infinite debt, which cannot be paid by a finite being. Therefore, the Psalmist says (48; 8-10): "No brother can redeem, nor shall man redeem: he shall not give to God his ransom. Nor the price

of the redemption of his soul," though he should labor and live for ever. It was necessary that he who could pay this debt due for the sins of mankind, and restore peace with God, should be more than man; he must be God, for God alone can accomplish that which is infinite; but it was also necessary that he should be man, because it was man who had sinned, and because man only can suffer and die, for this according to the decree of God was necessary for the atonement of our sins. Finally, it was necessary that he should be God and man in one and the same divine person, in order that all he did and suffered as man should have an infinite value and ment.

(c.) You perceive therefore that all this was accomplished in the child who was born this night in a stable at Bethlehem. This Infant is the true *God.* Thus the prophet Isaias says: "A child is born to us; and a son is given to us; and the government is upon his shoulder, end his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God, the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace."—*Is.* 9: 6. But he is also true *man,* since he assumed human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost, for the angel said to her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and the power of the Most High shall over-shadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."—*Luke* i: 35. Finally, this child united in an incomprehensible manner in his incarnation the human and the divine natures so closely and intimately, that the two natures, though different from each other, constitute only one divine person. Thus it is the new-born babe of Bethlehem who cancels the debt of our sins and reconciles us with God, and he begins to do this even at his birth. In what poverty, what lowliness he makes his entrance into the world! As a new-born babe, he suffers in the cold stable, in the hard crib, lying on hay and straw. Where is the beggar's child that is born so destitute, so abandoned as the divine Infant of Bethlehem? These great sacrifices Christ made for us at his birth in order to redeem us, and to acquire for us peace with God.

2. *Peace with men.*

(a.) How eloquently and gloriously the prophets describe this peace! David says: "Come, and behold ye the works of the Lord; what wonders he hath done upon earth, making wars to cease even to the end of the earth. He shall destroy the bow, and break the weapons: and the shield he shall burn in the fire."—*Ps.* 45: 9—10. And again: "In his days shall justice spring up, and abundance of peace, till the moon be taken away."—*Ps.* 71:7.

The prophet Isaias says: "And he (the Messias) shall judge the Gentiles, and rebuke many people: and they shall turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they be exercised any more to war."—*Is.* 2: 4. "And: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb: and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: the calf and the lion, and the sheep, shall abide together, and a little child shall lead them. The calf and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall rest together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox."—*Is.* 11: 6, 7. The meaning of these passages is this: The religion of the Messias will make the savage nations of the earth, who in their cruelty resemble wolves, leopards, lions and bears, like lambs and other gentle animals, so that they will live together in the most beautiful peace and harmony.

(à) These prophecies were fulfilled at the birth of Christ. Peace reigned everywhere, the temple of Janus was closed in token that war with all its horrors had ceased; the whole Roman empire, which at that time extended over almost all the nations of the earth, was at peace. God so ordained it to indicate thereby that the Child of Bethlehem was come to restore peace among men and to unite them in one great family of God.

(f.) But you will say: Although the world enjoyed peace at the birth of Christ, peace did not reign among individual men, and in communities and families. I reply: All who believed in Christ and adhered to him possessed this peace at his birth; his faithful disciples and followers had it and will have it, at all times. Behold Mary and Joseph, in what blessed unity did they not live with each other! Consider the pious shepherds, how peacefully and joyfully they hastened to the crib of Jesus, whence, replete with sweet peace, they returned to their flocks! And of the first Christian congregation we read that they "all had but one heart and one soul."—*Ads* 4:32. History also relates of the primitive Christians that the heathens regarded them with admiration, and said: "Behold, how they love one another." Such would be the case to-day; peace and harmony would reign in families and communities, in cities and countries, indeed throughout the whole world, if men would live according to the doctrine and example of Christ, and observe his favorite commandment, to love our neighbor. That there is so much antagonism and discord in the world is due to the fact that the majority of men have separated themselves from Christ and his religion, and disregard his commandments. Let the religion of Christ revive, and discord, disunion, dissension, contention, enmity, aversion and hatred will disappear from our midst, and peace and harmony will be restored.

3. *Peace with ourselves.*

(a.) Ths sad consequences of original sin are darkness of understanding, weakness of will, and a propensity to evil. Men's understanding is so darkened, that, as the prophet Isaias says, they call evil good, and good evil, and thus substitute darkness for light, and light for darkness.—*Is.* 5: 20. A proof of this is seen in the Gentiles with their horrible idolatry, and in the many infidels of our day, who trace the descent of man from the ape and proclaim the greatest absurdities as wisdom. How weak and prone to evil is the will of man! The apostle says: "I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man: but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am: who will deliver me from the body of this death?"—*Rotn. η: 22*—24. And God himself says: "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth."—*Gen. Z-,* 21. If we wish to have peace with ourselves we must control our passions, conquer our temptations, subject our appetites and propensities to the dictates of reason, and reason must be obedient to God.

(3.) Christ came to repair the injury which sin has caused in man, and to regulate all things according to his law. He has not taken the evil inclinations from our heart, but by his holy doctrine has enlightened our understanding, strengthened our will, and by his grace has enabled us to control our evil passions and desires, and in all things to do what is good and pleasing to God. Behold, how, at his first coming into the world, he despised, and, as it were, trampled under foot everything for which the sensual man strives so ardently, as honors, riches, comfort and pleasures. Should not this example teach us the vanity of all things earthly, and urge us to overcome all inordinate desires for them? And should not his grace, which Christ so willingly imparts to us, strengthen us to overcome all obstacles to salvation, and enable us to walk with constancy on the narrow path of virtue? Now if we thus preserve ourselves from injustice and sin, and serve God, we shall enjoy peace with ourselves. This peace we owe to our divine Saviour *i. e.,* to his doctrine, his example, and his grace. Jesus Christ is really the Prince of Peace, foretold by the prophets, for he has established peace with God, with men, and with ourselves. The question now arises, what must we do to preserve this peace?

Part II.

1. *To preserve this peace with God—*

(a.) We must hate and detest what he hates and detests. God being infinitely holy has the greatest horror of everything wicked. In the days of Noe, when sins and vices were multiplied, and all went the way of the flesh, God was angry, and said, that it repented him that he had made man on the earth *(Gen.* 6: 6), therefore he destroyed every living thing by the deluge. How can peace dwell in us if we lead a sinful life? No, "there is no peace to the wicked."—*Is.* 48: 22. The saints knew this, therefore they hated and detested nothing so much as sin. St. Edmund, archbishop of Canterbury, used to say: "*If* there were a burning limekiln at my right, and sin at my left, I would rather jump into the limekiln than consent to a sin." And St. Anselm went still farther by saying: "If the jaws of hell were open on one side, and on the other were sin flattering and enticing I would rather go down into hell alive than yield to a single sin." So much did the saints detest sin. Such a disposition you must endeavor to obtain if you wish to have peace with God; you must detest sin above all things and be ready to die rather than offend God by a mortal sin. How much do those deceive themselves who will not give up sinful association, abandon a bad habit, make restitution for injustices, forgive offenses, etc., if they think that they enjoy peace! Though at their devotions or in the performance of a good work, they may experience certain pleasant, consoling feelings in their heart, it is nevertheless not true peace; they do not possess the love and grace of God; consequently they are not at peace, for this is obtained only by true repentance and conversion.

(Æ.) *We must love and do that which God loves and wills.* **God** loves what is good, and therefore wills, first of all, that we keep his commandments. Thus he said to the Israelites: "Keep my precepts, and do them. I am the Lord that sanctify you."—*Levit.* 20: 8. Christ also in the New Law earnestly exhorts us to keep the commandments of God, upon the observance of which he makes our salvation depend. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."—*Matt.* 19: 17. Moreover, God wills that we observe the precepts of the Church, for Christ expressly declares: "If he will not heàr the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17. Again, it is the will of God that we zealously fulfil the duties of our religion, that we regularly assist at public worship, hear the word of God, pray devoutly, and frequently receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist. Finally, God wishes us to comply

with those duties which our station of life and our particular circumstances impose upon us, *e. g.*, superiors should be solicitous for the temporal and spiritual welfare of their inferiors, inferiors should honor, love and obey their superiors; the rich should give alms to the poor, and the poor be content in their straitened circumstances. Now, if we do all things faithfully in order to fulfil the will of God, we shall enjoy peace with him and verify the words of the Psalmist: "Much peace have they that love thy law; and to them there is no stumbling-block."—*Ps.* 118: 165.

2. To preserve this peace with men—

(a.) *We must have patience with their weaknesses.* **We are all** subject to many faultsand imperfections and need the indulgence of our fellow-men. Therefore the Apostle admonishes us in these words; "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so shall you fulfil the law of Christ."—*Gal.* 6: 2. Since God has so much forbearance with us and so patiently endures our frailties and faults, in fact, so frequently forgives us the most grievous sins, should we not also bear with the frailties of our fellow-men? This indulgence, however, should not go so far as to countenance, favor or sanction sins or to cause the violation of our duties. Example: Heli's indulgence towards his wicked sons. Affectionate earnestness and dutiful severity do not violate Christian peace. Example: Jesus, who frequently rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees, and even his disciples, and severely reprimanded them.

(i.) *We must take a sincere interest in their prosperity, and show sympathy in their adversity.* To a neighbor who finds a sympathizing soul joy becomes sweeter and affliction more tolerable. Hence the admonition of the Apostle: "Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep."—*Rom.* 12: 15. If all would do this they would be as the members of a body who share both weal and woe with one another. This mutual sympathy brings hearts nearer and causes the one to feel as the other. Nothing tends to confirm peace more than a communion of hearts.

(c.) *We must be friendly in our conduct and specially in our language.* Hence we read: "A sweet word multiplieth friends" *(Ecclus.* 6: 5), and in the Book of Proverbs (15: 1): "A mild answer breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury." Every one enjoys the companionship of a pleasant, affable man and seeks his society; but with a rude, irritable, boisterous person no one wishes to have any intercourse. In your conversation and association with others avoid everything repulsive and offensive, do not display a gloomy, angry countenance, treat no one harshly and contemptuously, and guard against bitter, harsh and injurious

words. If duty requires you to correct and to manifest earnestness in so doing, be cautious, lest you go too far; remain within the bounds of moderation and conduct yourself in such a way that an affectionate love may be discernible even in your severity and reprehension.

(di) Finally, we must guard against slander and detraction. It is but too true that slander and detraction are frequently the causes of disunion and enmity. Every one wishes to have others speak well of him, to have his faults concealed, and especially, to avoid having anything untrue preferred against him. Now, it he hears that somebody has slandered him, no matter whether it be true or not, he feels grieved, conceives an aversion against that person, and frequently entertains a lasting enmity in his heart. Therefore, be very cautious in speaking, and make it a rule not to reveal even the real faults of another, unless it is your duty to do so. Speak well of your neighbor, and conceal his faults, imitating the bees, which alight only on the flowers and cautiously avoid the thorns which are in such close proximity.

3. *To preserve this peace as regards ourselves,* we must have **a** good conscience. A good conscience is a perpetual feast.

(a.) A man who carries a bad conscience about with him wherever he goes has no rest or peace. His days upon earth may be happy, but he has no peace ; the reproaches of his conscience are ever tormenting him and give him no rest. Sinners are their own tormentors ; God's justice cannot punish them here on earth more effectually than by delivering them up to the tortures of conscience. This is Che reason why they have no rest or peace; their life is a slavery, for as many tyrants rule them as they have passions in which they indulge. They are ever full of disquietude and disgust, for they are tormented by ambition, which they cannot satisfy ; by avarice, which has never enough ; by envy, which like a worm gnaws the heart; by anger and hatred, which render life intolerable to them. They are never satisfied with what they have, but are always craving for something else. How can they enjoy rest and peace ? They may appear as if they had rest, they may even glory in peace, but it is only an infatuation, a blindness. They dream they have peace, and whilst dreaming they are swiftly gliding into hell. The words of Jeremias are applicable to them: "Peace, peace; and there was no peace/'— *Jer.* 6: 14.

(£,) How different is it with those who have a good conscience. Though they may be in want of what the world esteems and loves, though they may have to suffer much, they are always calm

and contented. The thought: "I have nothing with which to reproach myself, no injustice lies on my conscience," is a sweet consolation to them in all the tribulations of life. Who had more reason to be sad and despondent than St. Paul? He was scourged, betrayed by false friends, persecuted by Jews and Gentiles and everywhere threatened with death. Hunger and thirst, heat and cold, perils and tribulations of every description were his constant companions in all his apostolic journeys. How did he conduct himself amidst these great tribulations? Did he lose courage; did his confidence fail? By no means. On the contrary, he said: "I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation."—*II. Cor. j*: 4. Whence did he derive this consolation and joy? From a good conscience, which consoled him in every tribulation, and enabled him to endure the hardest trials with patience, even with joy.

PERORATION.

Make the resolution to-day to preserve with the greatest care this threefold peace which Jesus Christ, our new-born Saviour, brought from heaven to earth, or, if you do not already possess it, labor with the greatest zeal to obtain it Endeavor to make your will one with the divine will; hate and detest what God hates and detests; love and perform what he loves and wills, and you will have peace with him. Bear patiently with the frailties of your fellow-men, share with them their joys and sorrows, be friendly to them, and guard against slander and detraction, and you will enjoy peace with your neighbor. Be solicitous for a good conscience, control your passions and disorderly inclinations, conquer temptations, overcome the tempter, lead a good, pious, Christian life, and you will be at peace with yourself. Blessed are you, if you possess this threefold peace; Jesus Christ himself calls you blessed when he says: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."—*Matt.* 5: 9. Amen.

THIRD SKETCH

THE ECCLESIASTICAL CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF CHRISTMAS.

This day is bom to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David.—Luke 2: 11.

The work of our redemption began on Christmas day, which feast is, as it were, the first link in the chain of graces which God's

mercy end love have offered to mankind for their purification and sanctification. With justice therefore St. Chrysostom calls the festival of Christmas the mother of all festivals, for if Christ had not been born, we should not have a single festival throughout the year; no Circumcision, no Epiphany, no Easter, no Pentecost, no feasts of Mary and of the saints; indeed, if Christ had not been born there would be no Catholic Church, we should all be languishing in the darkness of error and sin, and heaven would remain closed against us for ever. But since Christ is born, the Christian era with its inexhaustible riches of graces is opened to us, for the Child who to-day lies poor and helpless in the crib is come to destroy the kingdom of Satan, to expiate our guilt and to redeem us. It is becoming therefore that the Church should celebrate the festival of Christmas, so that we may vividly represent to ourselves and employ for our salvation the priceless treasures of grace which on this day have been imparted to us. To aid you in this I propose to bring this mystery before you by explaining its ecclesiastical celebration.

I. At night;
II. In the day-time.

Part I.

The celebration at night consists—

I. *In the matins.*

(a.) This Office begins with the words: "Christ is bom to us, come, let us adore." These are the glad tidings which greet the ears of the faithful as they enter the Church on this holy night. Where is the Catholic heart which these tidings do not fill with joy? Where is the Catholic heart that does not adore with gratitude and love him who in his infinite love and mercy has vouchsafed to divest himself of the glory and majesty of his Godhead, to assume our human nature, and to come to us in the form of a weak, helpless child? Then follows the hymn proper for this festival, wherein we express our faith that Jesus Christ is God, like the Father, begotten of him from all eternity, and Creator of the world; then we recall to mind his Incarnation and Birth and lastly, we salute him exultingly as our Redeemer who is come to bring us grace and salvation. Next follow the psalms and lessons. All the *psalms* have reference to the mystery of the feast and represent it in all its grandeur and fulness of grace. They refer to Jesus Christ as the Son of God, of the same essence with the Father, as the King of heaven and earth, as the Prince of Peace, who, blessing mankind, reigns for ever; they enlarge upon the graces which have been imparted to man by his coming

into the world, and describe the exultation which his Incarnation has caused in heaven and on earth. The *lessons* also treat of the Incarnation and Divinity of Jesus Christ. Those of the first Noeturn are from the prophet Isaias, in which, among other things, he says: "A child is born to us; and a son is given to us; and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace."—*Is.* 9: 6. How beautifully the prophet here describes the divine and the human nature of Christ, the perpetuity of his kingdom, *i. e.,* of his Church, and the blessings which his government shall bring to man. The lessons of the second Nocturn are taken from a sermon which Pope Leo the Great preached, and in which he exhorts the faithful to universal joy at the birth of Christ, and to a mortified, penitential life. The lessons of the third Nocturn contain explanations of the three gospels of the feast, by the Doctors of the Church, St. Gregory the Great, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine

The matins conclude with the hymn of St. Ambrose and the prayer of the Church, "Grant," we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the new birth of Thine only-begotten Son in the flesh may deliver us who are held by the old bondage under the yoke of sin."

(A) These matins are said at midnight, because at this hour Jesus Christ was born. "While all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in her course, thy almighty word leapt down from heaven from thy royal throne."— *Wisd.* 18: 14, 15. It is but proper that on this thrice happy night, in which God gave us so great a proof of his love as to send us his only-begotten Son, we should devote ourselves to pious exercises and devoutly assist at the offices of the Church. Represent to yourselves that blessed night, in which Jesus Christ came upon earth as a poor child; and at a time when all were resting and no one was thinking of him, began the work of our redemption.

2. *In the first or midnight mass, a solemn High Mass,* which must not begin until the clock has struck the midnight hour.

(zz.) This mass is celebrated in memory of Christ's eternal generation from the Father. The celebration of the holy sacrifice at the hour of midnight signifies the eternal birth of Christ, first, because the hour of midnight reminds us of the silence of eternity; and secondly, because this birth is a mystery which is veiled in an obscurity into which we cannot penetrate with the eyes of our spirit. Of this mysterious birth of the Son of God, the prophet Isaias speaks when he says: "Who shall declare his generation?" —*Is.* 53 8.

(3.) The eternal birth of Jesus Christ from the Father is therefore referred to in this mass. Thus the Introit reads: "The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my Son, this day (that is, from all eternity) I have begotten Thee."—*Ps.* 2: 7. God, the heavenly Father, as the Apostle expressly remarks, spoke these words to Jesus Christ, thereby declaring him to be his Son, begotten of him. In the gospel of the mass the Divinity of Christ is also pre-eminently conspicuous in the words which the angel spoke to the shepherds: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David."—*Luke* 2: 10, 11. The word "Lord" applied to Christ is equivalent to God. The Church very properly repeats and brings before us, even in the first mass, the dogma of the Divinity of Christ; it is the foundation of our holy religion, for upon it rest the truth and divinity of our faith, and the reality of our redemption. Only as God was Jesus Christ the infallible teacher of truth; only as God could he make satisfaction for our sins and redeem us. Make to-day a fervent act of faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, admire the love which induced him to become man for us, prostrate yourselves before him and adore him.

Part II.

The celebration of Christmas in the day-time consists—.

i. *In the second mass,* which is celebrated *at the break of day* and which commemorates the birth of Christ *in time, i. e., his temporal birth.*

(a.) When morning dawns the darkness of night disappears by degrees, and the day begins. Thus when Christ was born, the darkness of error which covered the earth was dispersed and the light of faith began to dawn on the mind of man. The first who came to the knowledge of the new-born Saviour were the pious shepherds; and shortly after the Wise Men from the East, guided by a miraculous star, came to pay homage to the new-born Child as their Lord and Redeemer. Thus the birth of Christ truly resembles the morning dawn, since it cast a glimmer of the knowledge of the promised Redeemer into the night of Judaism and Gentilism.

(3.) That the second mass refers to the temporal birth of Christ is evident also from its Proper. The introit reads thus: "A light shall shine upon us this day; for our Lord is born to us," etc. The epistle also relates to the temporal birth of Christ, for it tells us in the very beginning that "the goodness and kindness of God

our Saviour hath appeared." In like manner the gospel also speaks of the temporal birth of our divine Saviour, for it conducts us with the pious shepherds to Bethlehem, and shows us the divine Child in the crib.

(ci) The mystery of the temporal birth of Christ is also of the greatest importance. According to the decree of God the sinful human race could not be redeemed except through the passion and death of his Son. If Christ wished to become our Redeemer he could not remain as God only; it was necessary for him to assume our nature and become man, for only as man could he suffer and die. As necessary as it is for our redemption that Jesus Christ should be truly God, so it is necessary that he should be truly man. Therefore, St. Cyril says: "Christ is God and man at one and the same time; for without the belief in his divinity the belief in his humanity would profit us nothing; and the belief in his divinity would profit us nothing if we did not believe in his humanity. If he were only man and not God his actions would not possess the virtue necessary to blot out our sins; and if he were only God and not man, he could not have taken our guilt upon himself." Admire the love and mercy which Christ has shown us in his Incarnation. Not the son of an earthly king, but the Son of God, the King of heaven and earth, becomes man, leads a poor, humble life, and dies the most painful and ignominious death of the cross—to redeem ano save us. Is not this an unparalleled sacrifice, an incomparable love? Oh, let us, with the pious, unostentatious shepherds, prostrate ourselves before the divine Child, who is present there in the tabernacle; let us adore him and thank him for his blessed Incarnation and promise to love and follow him all the days of our life.

2. *In the third mass,* which is celebrated *in broad daylight,* and which symbolizes *his spiritual birth in our heart.*

(a.) This spiritual birth consists in this, that we become interiorly changed, purified and sanctified. If we become reconciled to God by true repentance, and love him above all things, he will give us his grace and love, receive us as his children, and make us heirs of his kingdom. Of this spiritual birth of Christ in our heart, he speaks himself: "If any one love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him."—*John* 14: 23. To this spiritual birth the Church also calls our attention in the introit of the third mass in which we read: "A child is born to us, a son is given to us;" and she calls upon us to rejoice over this grace, adding: "Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle, because he hath done wonderful things."—*Ps. 97*: 1: We also pray for this spiritual birtL

in the collect of the mass, for in it we beseech God that through the birth of his Son in the flesh he would graciously deliver us from the slavery of sin. The epistle and the gospel also relate to this spiritual birth. Thus the epistle says of Jesus Christ that he has freed us from sin, thereby indicating his spiritual birth in us, and in the gospel we read; "As many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name: who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."—*John* i: 12, 13. The time also at which the third mass is celebrated, broad daylight, illustrates the spiritual birth of Christ. He will take up his abode in us with his grace only on condition that we put off the works of darkness, error and sin, and walk in the light of faith and love.

(Æ.) Everything depends on this spiritual birth of Christ in our heart; without it neither his eternal nor his temporal birth will profit us anything. But in order that Christ may be born in us, we must first shun all evil. Examine yourself and see whether grievous sins rest on your conscience. If such be the case you must free yourself from them by a good confession, and reinstate yourself in the state of grace. That Christ may be born in us we must banish all inordinate love of the world and of self from our heart, and love God above all things, and all things in God. Examine again whether you have no inordinate inclinations for anything earthly, for money, property, honors and dignities, or disorderly affection for any individual. If you find such an inclination or attachment in your heart, mortify it, and give your undivided love to God. If you free yourself from sin, and from all inordinate love of the world and of self, and love God above all things, and resolve to belong to him for time and eternity, then Christ will be born in you in a spiritual manner.

PERORATION.

This is the object of the Church in the celebration of the festival of Christmas. She represents to us the birth of our divine Saviour, in order that we may consider the mystery of the infinite love and mercy of God, and with renewed zeal labor for the salvation of our souls. Approach the crib and reflect that it was love alone that moved our Saviour to exchange heaven for earth, to come into the world in the greatest poverty and humiliation, and, after a life of sorrow, to die on the cross. Oh, let us with a grateful heart return thanks to him for this infinite love, and promise him fidelity and eternal love, that he may build his crib in our hearts, and that we may be able to say with the Apostle: "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me."—*Gal.* 2: 20. Amen.

FOURTH SKETCH.

CHRIST SANCTIFIES POVERTY; POVERTY LEADS TO CHRIST.

This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.—*Luke 2:* 11.

The birth of the Eternal Word is threefold. He was bom of his Father from all eternity; of his Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, in time, and he is spiritually born in the hearts of all good and pious Christians. For a perpetual remembrance of this threefold birth of Christ, the Catholic Church ordained from the very beginning of Christianity that every priest should celebrate three masses on Christmas Day. The first mass is generally celebrated at midnight, because it was at midnight that our Saviour was born. In this mass the gospel of St. Luke is read, which, relates that the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds who were keeping the night-watch over their flocks, and announced to them the good tidings that the promised and long-expected Redeemer had been born in Bethlehem. The second mass is said at daybreak, because at break of day the shepherds went over to Bethlehem, and found the divine Child lying in a manger adored by Mary and Joseph. The third mass is said in broad daylight, and in this last mass the gospel of St. John is read, which speaks of the Eternal Word becoming man and being the light of the world. "This shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger."—*Luke* 2:12. Christ, our incarnate God, born in astable! How mean and contemptible was his entrance into this world! The humblest inn of Bethlehem was closed against the Saviour of mankind; there was no kind greeting, no pleasant welcome awaiting his approach, and the God of heaven and earth could scarcely find on that auspicious night a place wherein to lay his head. "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God, how incomprehensible are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways." —*Rom.* 11: 33. Jesus, who was rich, for our sakes became poor to enrich us by his poverty. He has sanctified poverty for ever, and poverty embraced voluntarily or borne with patience leads to Christ and his eternal kingdom. These are the two points on which I wish to speak to you to-day.

I. Christ sanctified poverty;
II. Poverty leads to Christ.

Part I.

i. *Christ sanctified poverty not only by his words but also by his example.* He never taught what he did not himself practice, nay, he first practiced what he afterwards inculcated by words. He gave an example that we might imitate it. Example is better than precept, actions speak more forcibly than words. Thus we behold him born in the most abject poverty and from the crib to the cross leading a life of poverty. "The birdshave their nests," but the Saviour of mankind, when he came unto his own, was destitute of all earthly comfort, and had not wheron to rest his head. He could have been born in the midst of splendor and wealth, he could have been born of some mighty princess of the earth, but no, he chose a stable for his palace, a manger for his couch, swaddling clothes for his purple. Poverty, then, is the principal mark and characteristic of the birth of Christ. Who was his Mother? A poor virgin. Who his foster-father? The poor carpenter of Galilee. They owned a small dwelling at Nazareth, yet is was not there that Christ was born, but at Bethlehem, whither his parents had repaired in obedience to a decree of Caesar, in order to have their names enrolled among those who were descendants of the royal house of David, and there he was born in a stable, in the greatest poverty, a little straw was the substitute for a bed, the breath of an ox and an ass served to keep off the cold. Thus he sanctified poverty by his own example and by his humble birth, silently but eloquently declaring that the splendor and opulence of the world, and the glitter of pomp and pride did not become the greatness of the God-man among men. In poverty he came into the world, in poverty he lived all his life, and in poverty he died on the cross. He did not possess wealth, nor a richly furnished palace; he owned absolutely nothing. He wore a poor garment, a seamless coat, he ate and drank merely to sustain life. In his travels he sojourned with humble, pious people and ate whatever they set before him, seasoning it with instructive and edifying discourses. When they treated him in a manner becoming his dignity, he rebuked them as for example when Martha troubled herself about many things, whilst Mary her sister sat at his feet listening to the heavenly doctrine that fell from his lips. We may also imagine that on his travels he suffered many hardships. Who knows how often he suffered from hunger and thirst, how often, fatigued by his labors and journeys, he had no resting-place but the bare ground, no shelter but the canopy of heaven. The strongest proof of his poverty is that at his death on the cross the soldiers found nothing to divide among themselves but his garments, as had been foretold by the royal prophet: "They parted my garments amongst them; and upon my vesture they cast lots."—*Ps.* 21: 19.

2. Christ sanctified poverty not only by his example but also by his words. He preached the gospel first to the poor who always stand most in need of consolation and who receive it thankfully, but not to the rich who revel in pleasures and cherish pride. He said to the disciples, referring to John the Baptist: "Go and relate to John that to the poor the gospel is preached."—*Luke* 7: 22. It is the poor he calls blessed, it is to the poor he promised heaven. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 3. "Blessed are ye that hunger now: for you shall be filled."—*Lukeb*\2\. Again he says; "Come to me, all you who labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—*Matt,* 11: 28. This is chiefly said to the poor, for in recompense for the goods of this world, of which they are destitute, he sends them peace and consolation that surpass all understanding. Did Christ ever call the rich blessed? No. What did he say to them? One day a rich young man asked him: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may have life everlasting? He said to him: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."—*Matt.* 19: 17. And when the rich man replied that he had kept the commandments from his youth, Jesus said to him: "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."—*Matt.* 19: 21. The rich man could not resolve to do this, but went away sad and returned no more; therefore Christ said to his disciples: "Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 19: 23. And again: " It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 19: 24. But shall no rich man be saved? Christ does not say this; he only says: It is hard for a rich man to be saved, because rich people, generally speaking, set their hearts and affections entirely upon their riches, think more of *gold* than of *God,* and are hard-hearted to God's poor.

(a.) Those rich people will *not be saved who have both the riches of this world and the love of them, because such people are in most cases avaricious.* It is not money, but the love of money, that is the root of all evil. " No one," says St. Francis of Sales, "will acknowledge that he is avaricious, and exceedingly avaricious; far from admitting that he is infected with this vice he will scorn it as a most base principle. But (continues the saint), if you continually desire and long vehemently and with disquietude for the goods of this world, notwithstanding all you may say, you are in reality avaricious, just as he who continually, vehemently and with disquietude desires to drink is feverish." Men of this description are the furthest from God, and to them the words of Christ apply: "Woe to you that are rich," or, as St. Francis says:

"Christ calls the poor in spirit, blessed, consequently, cursed are the rich in spirit, for theirs is the torment of hell."

(3.) Those rich men will indeed be saved who possess their riches as if they possessed them not, but make use of them to obtain the riches of eternity, who consider them not as the end, but as means to the end; who although endowed with worldly wealth preserve, nevertheless, poverty in spirit, who abounding in temporal goods make good use of them, and have no lasting, vehement and disquieting attachment to their possessions. Christ does not demand of every one to sell whatever he has and give it to the poor; all are not even allowed to do so, because the sacred duty of providing for a family is incumbent upon many. If, however, they love and practice poverty in spirit, the words of Christ will apply to them also: "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

(l·.) Christ in sending his Apostles to preach the gospel, provided them with neither money nor clothes for their journey, but said to them: "Do not possess gold and silver nor money in your purses, nor scrip on your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor staff." Evangelical poverty was to be the ornament of the Apostles and the credentials of their mission from above. Christ commended poverty in the parable of Dives and Lazarus. The rich man was clothed in purple and feasted sumptuously every day, and Lazarus, full of sores, lay at his gate, desirous of being fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, and no one gave him them; only the dogs, more merciful than man, came and licked his sores. Lazarus died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; the rich man also died and was buried in hell.

Part II.

1. *Poverty leads to Christ and his kingdom,* if for the love of him we lead a life of poverty, or bear poverty with patience so long as it pleases God. There are, however, some poor people, who the poorer they become the further they are removed from God. I mean those who live in indigence through their own fault, who are too indolent to make the necessary efforts to procure or provide a decent livelihood for themselves or their families, and who, not seeing or not acknowledging this to be the case, bear their misery, the consequence of their worthless life, with impatience, and in the bitterness of their heart murmur against God, repine at their situation and make use of every means, even the worst, to improve their circumstances. I mean those who are enamored of worldly goods, which nevertheless they do

not possess; those who live in want, but incessantly, inordinately and with disquietude long and sigh for the riches of which they are deprived. To them also these words apply: "Wo to you that are rich." Such people are in a far worse situation than the rich who are avaricious, for they at least have their reward, whilst the former have only the torment of an ungratified desire.

When I say that poverty leads to Christ, I do not refer to such people. The humble only are poor with a joyful heart, for inflamed with the love of God they find their happiness in submission to his will, and making a virtue of necessity, they endeavor to please God who himself led a life of poverty. The Apostles were in poverty, humble followers of Christ. And when Peter, in his own name and in theirs, had asked the question: "Behold, we have left all things, and have followed thee: what, therefore, shall we have?" he said to them: "Amen, I say to you that . . . every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting."—*Mail.* 19: 27-29. The primitive Christians were humble followers of Christ in poverty, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles: "And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did any one say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but all things were common unto them.... As many as were owners of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the Apostles. And distribution was made to every man according as he had need."—*Acts* 4: 32-35. They chose voluntary poverty in order to bear some resemblance to Christ and to become with him one heart and one soul. The founders of Religious Orders, as St. Benedict, St. Dominic, St. Francis, as well as other patriarchs of Monastic Orders, and those who embraced their institutes, were humble followers of Christ, in roluntary poverty.

Now since so many wealthy people have renounced all their worldly possessions and embraced poverty for the love of Christ, and by leaving all things and following him have been brought into the most intimate union with him, why should not you who have been born and reared in poverty, or who have become poor through misfortune or your own fault, patiently bear the burden laid upon you. Why should not you make a virtue of necessity by conforming your will to the will of God? Why not endure what cannot be remedied or cured? The world having no joys nor consolations for the poor, those are doubly unhappy who forfeit by discontent or injustice the blessing belonging to poverty. Christ repudiates them for their wickedness, and the world disdains them for their poverty. It is no disgrace to be

poor, since Christ sanctified poverty by his words and example. Believe firmly that it is the will of God that you should be poor, for if it were not his will you would be rich, because it is in his power to make you rich. No doubt poverty is more beneficial to you than riches would be; for it is not improbable that were you rich you might forget God, and, as so many people do, misuse your riches for your own destruction. God knows this; he loves you and ordains what he foresees will be for your salvation, for whatever he does, he does well. Therefore, accept and bear poverty, ascomingfrom the hand of God, unite temporal with spiritual poverty, that is, unite your poverty with the poverty of Christ, that it may be meritorious for you in eternal life. Then Christ will be your friend, you will enjoy peace, the greatest treasure man can possess in this world, a peace which the world and all the riches of the world cannot give. If you think thus of poverty and show your sentiments to be such by a pious and virtuous life, you will participate in the merits of the saints who by the way of holy poverty entered in the joy of the Lord.

Without doubt, the poor man has to suffer many hardships of which the rich are ignorant, but if he bears the poverty and hardships incident to his state of life with patience, for the love of God, he will receive a crown of immortal glory hereafter. Therefore, do not lose confidence, your reward will be very great in heaven. What a glorious triumph will not a poor man celebrate, if he has fought his way through life honestly though in poverty; with what joy will not his soul abound when on crossing the threshold of eternity he is greeted with these words: "Come thou blessed of my Father; thou hast suffered with me, thou shalt now reign with me in my kingdom." The King of Glory who himself when on earth had not whereon to lay his head, will give you this loving invitation. The poor man whose time and thoughts are constantly employed and taken up with his toil and daily labor, stands a fairer chance of a happy eternity hereafter than he whose fortune enables him to gratiiy his passions. The poverty of Lazarus, supported with patience, conveyed him to Abraham's bosom, whilst the wealth of the rich glutton, squandered in rioting and feasting sumptuously, plunged him into hell for all eternity. They who would become rich fall into temptation, into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which lead them to perdition. Be satisfied with the necessaries of life. The rich man must leave all, he will take no more out of this world than the poorest, that is, none of his earthly possessions. The soul will enter eternity alone and unattended, except by her works, whether good or evil.

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k, then, at the crib in the stable of Bethlehem, where the God-man is lying upon straw. This should console you in your poverty. Bear it with patience and resignation to the will of God, and remember that not by being rich, but by being poor, you bear a resemblance to Christ and are of the number of the elect, as the Apostle says: "Those who are of the number of the elect must be made conformable to the image of his Son," who teaches us that those who are truly poor in spirit and affection and submit with patience to the hardships incident to their state of life, merit for themselves life everlasting, for "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Amen.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD, OR NEW YEAR'S DAY.

Epistle.—*Titus* 2: 11-15. Dearly beloved: The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works. These things speak and exhort in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel.—*Luke* 2:21. At that time: After eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

FIRST SKETCH.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

After eight days were accomplished that the child should be ***circumcised, his name was called Jesus.***—*Luke* 2:21.

This is the day for congratulations. Everywhere, in town **and** country, people are wishing each other a Happy New Year. It is a time-honored custom and therefore I also wish you a Happy New Year. These wishes, provided they come from the heart, are good and proper, for Christian charity obliges us to wish well to one another. The year that has just passed has not proved **a** happy one for many; crosses and afflictions have visited them, and some have died. To a certain extent, however, it is in our **power to realize the New Year's wish—and how it can be done**

we shall hear to-day. I will show you how we must act that the present year which he begin to-day may become for us—

Z *A happy year;*
IL A new year;
ILL A perfect year.

Part I.

1. How this year may become a happy year the Church indicates in the gospel for this festival. We read: "After eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus." The Church places the *name of Jesus at the beginning of the year,* to teach us the important truth that the new year can become a happy year only *when Jesus lives in our hearts.*

(a.) Men who permit unbridled passions to rule their hearts cannot promise themselves a happy year. Though they may possess all that is requisite for a comfortable life, such as good health, riches, honor and reputation, amusements and pleasures, they do not feel happy, for their passions banish all rest and peace from their hearts, without which there is no happiness. We can with justice compare the ruling passions to storms which plough up the sea, and do not allow it to become calm whilst they rage. Examples: Cain, who was governed by the passion of envy, which deprived him of rest and peace, therefore God said to him: "Why art thou angry; and why is thy countenance fallen?"—*Gen.* 4:6; Aman, whom King Assuerus had raised above all the princes of the empire, and before whom all the servants of the palace were obliged to bend their knee, for he allowed himself to be controlled by pride, notwithstanding all his distinction, and although he had attained the very summit of earthly happiness, felt miserable, and said: "Whereas I have all these things, I think I have nothing."—*Esther* 5: 13; King Saul, who allowed himself to be carried away by his unbridled ambition to such an extent that notwithstanding all his greatness and power he was often melancholy and dejected, and frequently raved like a madman. This is the case with every one who suffers himself to be governed by a passion, such as pride, avarice, envy or impurity; he has no peace, and is therefore unhappy. How different it is with those in whose heart Jesus dwells. In their simple, ordinary life they are far more content and happy than sinners in the enjoyment of all the pleasures of the world. St. Anthony was never seen without a pleasant, cheerful countenance. When he was pointed out to strangers, it was with the words: "There he is; the one with the smiling face." St. Bernard was always

so merry that he frequently felt scrupulous about it, saying: "*I* am more cheerful in solitude than I was in the world." St. Ignatius himself was always cheerful, and admonished his brethren to be the same. Why were the saints so cheerful? Because passions found no room in their hearts, for Jesus dwelt therein. How merry children are! How contentedly they pass their days! Joy beams in their eyes, and the most trifling things make them laugh. What is the cause of their joyousness? Principally their innocence. No sinful passion has yet taken possession of their heart, because Jesus dwells therein. Therefore if we close our heart against every passion, and are solicitous for Jesus to remain with us, we shall be contented and happy.

2. If Jesus lives in our heart, even the tribulations which the new year may perhaps bring will not disturb our happiness. Faith teaches us that the sufferings and tribulations of this life are not evils, but rather great graces from heaven. The saints were convinced of this truth; hence, they looked upon sufferings and trials as the greatest graces. St. John of the Cross says: "If God gave you the power of raising the dead to life, he would give you less than if he would let you suffer. You would owe him great thanks for the gift of miracles; but if he makes or lets you suffer, he himself becomes your debtor, if you suffer with patience." The Apostles were cast into prison, scourged and threatened with death, because they continued to preach in the name of Jesus; but "they went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus."—*Acts* 5 : 41. St. Paul endured persecutions, tribulations and sufferings of every kind ; but far from feeling unhappy on that account, he says : "I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation."—*II. Cor.* 7: 4. St. Francis of Assisi *rsed to call sickness and pains his brothers and sisters, poverty his bride, and contempt his dearest daughter. Though the new year may bring with it sufferings or joys, in either case it will be a happy une for you if you firmly adhere to Jesus, and, according to the example of the saints, serve him faithfully.

Part IL

What must we do that the present year may become for us a new year? We ourselves must become new, ..cording to the words of the Apostle: "Put off the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, who, according to God, is created injustice, and holiness of truth."—*Ephei.* **4:** *22-24.* The present year must become new—

1. *For those who heretofore have lived, in forgetfulness of God and in sin; they must be solicitous for a thorough^ speedy conversion.* We read in the gospel that our divine Saviour called Matthew, who was sitting in the custom house, and said to him: "Follow me."—*Mark* 2: 14. Again, we read that he cried out to Zacheus on the sycamore tree: "Zacheus, make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house."—*Luke* ig : 5. The gospel tells us that both immediately obeyed the invitation of Christ. Let us suppose they had not heeded it, or that they said: "Not now, but later, at some future time, at a more convenient season" —what would have happened? Very probably Jesus would not have called them again; they would have perished. Every one has his seasons of grace; if he makes good use of them he will be saved; but if he impenitently perseveres in sin he will be eternally lost. The present year will be a time of grace for many sinners; if they are converted and reconciled to God they will be saved; if they reject or abuse the proffered grace they will be rejected. Moreover, let us seriously reflect that no man is exempt from death; the babe upon its mother's breast, the child that goes to school, young men and women, those in more mature years, the aged and feeble, all fall victims to death. One retrospective glance into the past year in our parish corroborates this truth. How many has death taken from our midst! How many, who a year ago assisted at mass on this festival have been laid in their last earthly resting-place—the grave. Sinners especially should fear a sudden death. To them are applicable the words of the Apostle: "When they shall say peace and security, then shall sudden destruction come upon them, as the pains upon her that is with child and they shall not escape."—*I. Thess.* 5:3.

Examples: The people at the time of the deluge; Ophni and Phinees, Heli's sons; Absalom. Death came upon then unawares and claimed them for his own. Now, if Catholics who have lived in sin a long time, say ten or twenty years, should die suddenly in this year, can we expect for them anything else than eternal damnation? Ah! who among us could be so careless and forgetful of salvation as to persevere in impenitence during the coming year? Employ it for your salvation; if you are in a state of sin become reconciled to God by a sincere confession and bring forth fruit worthy of penance. Only thus will the year 19—prove to be a new year for you.

2. *For all without exception.* Though we may not be guilty of grievous sins, yet we are contaminated by small faults and many imperfections. Some are very vain and ambitious; the least appearance of insult or seeming neglect excites them and makes them ill-humored. Others are too much attached to temporal goods, they seldom think of their salvation and do not practice

works of mercy. Some are not circumspect in their looks and do not promptly banish impure thoughts. Others are very much inclined to anger; they say and do in their moments of passion any things which they afterwards regret. Others tell lies, love to speak of the faults of their neighbors, and reveal what they ought to keep secret. Others are wilfully distracted while saying their prayers, both in and out of church, manifest little zeal in hearing the word of God and receiving the sacraments. These faults and imperfections, of which many have been guilty for the greater part of their life, must be avoided. Christ demands this, for he says: "Be you perfect, as also your heavenly Father s perfect."—*Matt.* 5: 48. And again: "He that is just, let him be justified still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still."—*Apoc. 22'.* ii. St. Peter also exhorts us in these words: "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." We have the most important reason for striving earnestly after perfection. He who remains always in his imperfections deprives himself not only of a great measure of future feli» city in heaven, but also incurs a long and severe punishment in purgatory; in fact, he runs the risk of falling into grievous sins, and of losing his immortal soul. Therefore renew to-day your zeal and resolve to lay aside your predominant fault, so that the present year may be to you in reality a new one.

Part III.

Now, the next question is: How can we make this year not only a happy year, but also a perfect one? We can do this by diligently employing the whole year in the service of God.

We must serve God because he is our Lord. "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and shalt serve him only."—*Deict.* 6: 13. God created us that we might serve him; he who employs this life for anything else than the service of God acts in a way that is contrary to the purpose for which he was created, and his fate will be that of the unprofitable servant who buried his talent, and on that account was cast out into exterior darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.—*Matt.* 25:39. Every master requires his servants to serve him for the time he engages them; he is not satisfied if they work for him only for a few months during the year, and spend the rest of the time perhaps in serving another master. The same holds good in respect to God. From the day we come to the knowledge of God, to the last moment of our life, we must serve him; our last day of sendee is the day of our death; on that day we cease to serve in order to reign with Christ in heaven. Our resolution and our

prayer on New Year's Day should be: "My Lord and My God, if thou prolong my life this year, I will employ it in thy service. I will serve thee every day, every hour, as well as I can, with the assistance of thy grace." But shall we be able to serve God as we ought to serve him? Oh, yes; for to serve God is nothing else than to do his will, and with the assistance of his grace everyone can fulfil his holy will. God wished us *to avoid sin.* If, therefore, you always have the intention not to offend God by a single sin, not even by a venial one, your life will be a continual service of God, because you will always be what God wills. ***If*** *you practice Christian virtues and good works as often and in the best manner you can,* ***if*** *you conscientiously* ***fulfil*** *the duties of religion and of your state of life,* ***if*** *you perform your daily duties diligently and with a good intention,* ***if*** *you submit to sufferings and afflictions, and bear them patiently,* you serve God, because you do what God wills. Yes, *whether you eat, sleep, drink, enjoy a lawful recreation, or sanctify by a good intention* actions which are in themselves most insignificant, you serve God, because you do what he wills. Therefore, no one can say that he cannot serve God, for opportunities to do the will of God are wanting to none, rich or poor, young or old, single or married, the sick or the healthy. To serve God constantly it is, however, not required that we do good always, but only that we have the will to do good whenever an opportunity presents itself, or as often as we can, for God accepts the good will for the deed.

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Endeavor then to make the New Year's wish a happy reality. The present year will be a happy one for you if you control your disorderly disinclinations and passions, and permit Christ to reign in your heart. Let no day pass without practicing some mortification, and give your whole, your undivided love, to God. This year will be a new year for you if you lay aside everything that is sinful, live penitently, and endeavor daily to become more perfect. Avoid not only all mortal, but as much as possible all venial sins, and earnestly strive to abandon your favorite faults. The new year will be a happy one for you if you spend every day in the service of God. Alas, there are, perhaps, many among us who, although they have already lived twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or more years, have never served God one year: in fact, not a month, not a week, as they should have served him. How necessary, then, it is that we begin at least now to serve him with persevering fervor. Let us adhere to God and faithfully serve him, that in us may be fulfilled the wish for "A Happy New Year."

SECOND SKETCH

FAREWELL TO THE OLD YEAR AND GREETING TO THE NEW.

After eight days were accomplished that the child should be circum,' cisedy his name was called Jesus.—Luke 2:21.

Not only eight days but three hundred and sixty-five days have passed, and our good God has graciously permitted us to live to see another year, at the beginning of which very significantly stands the name of Jesus, whereby we are admonished that we should not, like the pagans of old, pass from the old to the new year in rioting and drunkenness, in chambering and impurities, but in putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, in pious meditations and religious exercises. The old year is past, never to return, but not as if it had never been, for whatever we have done during its course, be it good or evil, is recorded in the book of life and will merit for us on the day of judgment either eternal salvation or eternal ruin. The same may be said of the new year, if God preserves us during its course. As rational beings, therefore, and still more as Catholics, we cannot frivolously **and** thoughtlessly pass from the old **to the new year. Let us seri**ously reflect—

I. How we should bid adieu to the old ***year;***
II. How we should greet the new year.

Part I.

We should bid adieu to the old year—

i. *With thanks and gratitilde.* **When St. Paul took leave of the** Christians of Miletus he bade an affectionate adieu to them; he reminded them of the benefits he had conferred on them and told them that they should see his face no more, and kneeling down he prayed with them. "There was much weeping among them all; and falling on the neck of Paul they kissed him, being grieved most of all for the word which he had said, that they should see his face no more."—*Acts* 2<*y.* 15, *et seq.* The past year has been a friend from whom we have received many benefits; we should therefore not let it pass without sorrow and without bidding adieu to it with a grateful heart. Let us cursorily call to mind all the benefits we have received during the year for body and soul.

(e) *The corporal benefits.* God has preserved our life during the past year. Many of the members of this parish to whom a year ago their friends wished a long and happy year are no longer in our midst, they have been called to render an account of their stewardship. Might not the same have happened to us? If our life has been spared us to work out our salvation, have we not reason to thank God to-day for this grace with a grateful heart? Most of you during the past year have enjoyed good health and have been able to attend to business. Though you were obliged to work hard during the day and were tired in the evening, a quiet sleep during the night so refreshed and strengthened you that in the morning you could again go to your day's work with renewed vigor. Should you not thank God for this, especially when you consider that so many in our congregation and elsewhere had to endure severe illnesses which prevented them from earning the necessary money for themselves and their families? As reported in the public press, a terrible famine has raged in Japan, China and Persia; in China alone over five millions of people have died, more than the entire population of the State of New York. The famine was so terrible that the people were obliged to eat things they could only view with horror and disgust; parents killed their children, and children killed their aged parents to stay their hunger with their flesh. Can anything more horrible be imagined! How much reason have we to-day to thank God, since in the past year he blessed us with bountiful crops, so that none have suffered the pangs of hunger. And though there may have been some who for lack of work or on account of unfavorable circumstances were reduced to want, they met with charitable people who assisted them in their necessities; no one starved for want of food. Other countries have been devastated by war, while we have enjoyed the blessings of peace, so that every one could attend to his business free from molestation. Do we not owe God thanks for all these blessings?

(b.) The spiritual benefits. A still greater debt of gratitude we owe to God for the spiritual graces which he has so liberally bestowed upon us Where shall I begin, and where end, in order to bring before the eyes of your mind the number and greatness of these graces? Every salutary thought, every interior inspiration and impulse to good, and every motion of the conscience which endeavored to deter you from evil and urge you to good—were they not all graces which God imparted to you for the salvation of your soul? The good lessons and corrections which you received so frequently, the good examples which pious Catholics set before you, what else were they than graces for your

salvation? On fifty-two Sundays and on several festivals of the year* you were obliged to assist at the holy sacrifice of the mass and to listen to the word of God. Were these not also graces, and great graces, for the salvation of your soul? Moreover, many of you were able to assist at mass even on week days, as there are two priests in our parish who daily celebrate mass. What shall I say of the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist? You know yourselves that confessions are heard every Saturday afternoon and evening till far in the night, as also on the morning of every Sunday and holiday, in fact every morning, and that you have every convenience to confess and communicate if you only have the desire. Oh, how much more favored are you than many congregations which even for years have no pastor, and who must travel many a mile to be able to hear mass or to confess and receive communion. When to-day you recall to mind the many graces which God has so abundantly bestowed upon you during the past year, have you not reason to thank him from your heart?

2. *With compunction of heart.* When the prophet Nathan accused David of his sin and at the same time reminded him of the benefits bestowed upon him by God, full of sorrow and compunction of heart David could say nothing else than: "I have sinned against the Lord."—*II. Kings,* 12 : 13. Must we not say the same when we consider that although God has done so much good to us, yet we have so often and so grievously offended him?

(λ) Let us first think of the sins which are so frequently committed by the abuse of both corporal and spiritual goods. How do the majority of Catholics generally employ their means? For the honor of God, the salvation of their soul, or the welfare of their fellow-men? Alas! no; in giving way to pride, impurity, drunkenness, and the gratification of their sinful lusts and passions. How many will be obliged to say that they have despised the inspirations of their conscience and the good lessons and admonitions which were so frequently given to them! Are there not some in our parish who during the whole year perhaps did not listen to three sermons; who did not once read a spiritual book, frequently neglected to hear mass even on Sundays and holidays? And in regard to the reception of the sacraments, has it not come so far now-a days that many do not go to confession and communion even once a year, that they allow even Paschal time to pass without confession and communion, or, what is more frequently the case, receive the sacraments sacrilegiously?

(£.) Let us call to our mind the sins wich are committed by the transgression of the commandments of God and his Church, and by the neglect of the duties of one's state of life. If we sincerely

examine ourselves, we must confess that we have frequently sinned in thought, word, deed and omission, secretly and publicly, knowingly, and unconsciously, against the commandments of God, against our neighbor, and against the salvation of our own soul; therefore, each one has reason to strike his breast and to cry out with the publican: O God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Think then, to-day, in the bitterness of your heart of the sins which you have committed in the past year and during your whole life, make an act of contrition for them and ask God's grace and pardon. Thus take leave of the old year in a spirit of thankfulness and compunction of heart.

Part II.

How should we greet the new year?

1. *With confidence.* What the year 19— has in store for us we do not know, but of one thing we may be convinced, viz., that it will not be free from sufferings and tribulations. No day passes without its trouble. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. How much more must every year, which consists of three hundred and sixty-five days, have its evils and troubles? But let us put our confidence—

(a.) *In God.* He is powerful enough to assist us in every necessity and to bestow upon us what we need for the present and the future life. At the same time he is goodness itself; there is no earthly father who loves his children as well and as much as our Father in heaven loves us. He is also infinitely wise, and governs all things for our good, if we serve him with fervor and fidelity. Call to mind Joseph of Egypt, David and Tobias, how wisely and how well the providence of God ruled over them and disposed of all things for their good. Though the new year may bring us many troubles and afflictions, let us stand firm in our confidence in God, "casting all your care upon him; for he hath care of you."—*I. Pet.* 5:7.

(b.) *In good people.* True, there are people whose hearts are cold, upon whom the woes of others make no impression, who even make use of their neighbor's need for their own advantage. Of this class are usurers and the avaricious. But thanks be to God, of these there are few; the majority consists of those who have compassion on the needy, the afflicted and the unfortunate, and assist them as much as is in their power. Have recourse to these good people in your necessities and show confidence in them; they will advise you in doubt and assist you in med. But

you must also justify the confidence which others place in you; be kindly disposed towards every one and esteem yourselves happy when you can do an act of charity or a service to your neighbor. We are Christians and should love one another ar Christ has loved us and delivered himself for us.—*Ephes.* 5: 2.

(r.) *In your clergy.* "For they watch as being to render an account of your souls."—*Heb.* 13: 17. Be assured that their intention is good, and that even in cases in which they act with a certain severity with a view to remove scandals, to eradicate evil habits, and to put a stop to sins and vices, they have only your welfare in view. Repose confidence in them and therefore make use of the means of grace which God through them administers to you; listen diligently to the word of God, which they so often preach to you, and receive, as often as possible, the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist. Ask of God daily the grace that on your death-bed he will send a priest to administer to you the holy sacraments, so that calmly and happily you may depart into eternity.

2. *With patience—*

(a.) *With those among whom we live and have our dealings.* Seneca said: "Our ancestors complained, we complain, and our descendants will complain, that there are many with whom it is difficult to deal." All men have their faults and frailties; they are, *e. g.*, ambitious and everywhere desire to be preferred; they are self-willed and stubborn and easily get angry when things do not succeed as they wish; they are irritable and passionate, so that the least thing renders them ill-humored, frivolous, quarrelsome, and vindictive. What, then, is more necessary than patience so that peace and harmony may be maintained. Follow, therefore, the advice of the Apostle: "Bear ye one another's burdens; and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."—*Gal.* 6: 2. Especially you married people, brothers, sisters and neighbors, have patience and be indulgent with one another in order to preserve peace, "bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against one another: even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also."—*Col.* 3: 13.

(bi) With the difficulties of our state. Man's life upon earth is a warfare. Every state of life has its trials and difficulties. The farmer, the tradesman, the merchant, all complain. How necessary, then, is patience, that every one may peaceably and with resignation bear the tribulations incident to his state of life and thereby merit heaven. A soldier once wrote in his prayer-book: "I am now a soldier, and can't help it, therefore I will carry my

cross like a man and not complain like a child over **a** thing **that** cannot be changed." Such should also be our language. Let us say: I am this or that, married or single, a servant, sick, or poor, I cannot change my condition, therefore I will persevere in patience, and courageously follow my Saviour on the way of the cross, that I may also follow him into heaven.

3. *Finally, with good resolutions—*

(λ.) *To renounce our sinful life and to dopenance.* Without doubt there are some in this congregation who have entered upon the new year with mortal sins on their conscience; they have perhaps for some time past been guilty of the sin of impurity, addicted to drunkenness; they live in enmity, or commit injustices in their dealings with their fellow men. How deplorable is the state of such persons! They are deprived of sanctifying grace; are consequently enemies of God and entirely incapable of acquiring merits for heaven; they die in their sins and are irretrievably lost. If you are obliged to say to yourselves that you have spent the past year, and perhaps many years of your life, in a state of sin, now at least make in the first hours of the new year the agnanimous resolution to renounce your sinful life and become reconciled to God by true repentance. As soon as possible make a good, a general confession, to free yourselves from your sins, and as true penitents work out your salvation.

(b) For the future to abstain not only from all mortal but as much as possible from every venial sin. True repentance requires that one firmly determines to avoid every mortal sin. This resolution must be sincere and so fixed that you are determined to suffer every evil, even death itself, rather than commit a mortal sin. This must be your resolution, which you should frequently renew, especially at confession and in time of temptation: My Jesus, I will rather die than offend thee by a mortal sin! Make also the resolution to avoid as much as possible every venial sin. I say, as much as possible, because without a special grace of God it is not possible always to avoid venial sins. If therefore notwithstanding your good resolutions you commit venial sins through human frailty, you must not on that account be discouraged; be sorry for them and humbly beg pardon of God and beseech his grace so that you may thoroughly amend your life. Especially make it a rule never to commit a venial sin with knowledge and premeditation.

PERORATION.

You kn)W now how you should bid adieu to the old year and how greet the new one. Do not take leave of the old year without thanking God for all the graces and benefits he has conferred on you during its course and during your whole life; be sorry from the bottom of your heart for the sins by which you have so often and grievously offended him, and humbly ask his grace and pardon. Turn your thoughts then upon the new year and greet it with confidence in God, in good people, and, especially, in your clergy; greet it with patience and with the firm determination to receive and bear for the love of God whatever disagreeable and unpleasant things it may bring; greet it with good resolutions, and promise God to avoid every mortal sin and as much as possible also every venial sin, and to serve him with constancy and fidelity. Blessed are you, if thus disposed you bid adieu to the old year and greet the new one; God will be with you and help you to attain your final aim and destiny. Amen.

THIRD SKETCH.

THE PRIEST'S NEW YEAR'S WISH TO HIS CONGREGATION.

His name was called Jesus.—Luke **2:21.**

There is scarcely any custom more general than that of wishing one another "A Happy New Year." We hear this wish in cities, towns and villages, in the palaces of kings and in the huts of the poor, in fact everywhere. What, then, do people wish one another on New Year's Day? Good health, temporal prosperity, success in business, happiness, contentment, and a long life. These things are indeed delightful and desirable, but they are not the greatest blessings we can receive. All is not over with this earthly life; our final destiny is to enjoy the eternal felicity of heaven. Our new year's wishes therefore should be directed not only to temporal but also to eternal things. The Church has this object in view in placing the name of Jesus at the beginning of the year, and, as it were, crying out to us: Do not forget that you are Christians; in all your works and occupations have Christ before your eyes; follow him, that the new year may become to you a year of salvation. As your pastor I must first, and above

all thing's, wish you what is necessary for the salvation of your soul, viz.:

I. A faithful attachment to your mother, the Catholic Church ·
II. A conscientious fulfilment of your duties as Catholics.

Part I.

The first thing I wish you for the new year is a faithful attachment to your mother, the Catholic Church. This wish is founded upon —

i. *The circumstances of the time.*

(a.) The latter part of the present century bears a great resemblance to that of the eighteenth century. At that time the infidels and liberals of every country, but especially of France, united to form a league for the destruction of both spiritual and temporal authortiy. Knowing that the Catholic Church was the most opposed to their nefarious designs, she was the first to be destroyed, cost what it might. Voltaire, the leader of the infidels, continually said: "Labor in the vineyard, destroy the Catholic Church." To accomplish this they published a number of books wherein they derided and blasphemed everything that is venerable and sacred to the Christian, denied the Divinity of Christ, extolled vice as virtue, and placed the happiness of man in the gratification of carnal lust. These writings were widely circulated and as may be well imagined caused a great deal of mischief. The revolution broke out in France and upset all the order whicn existed both in Church and State. The king's throne was destroyed and the practice of the Christian religion ceased; the churches were profaned, the altars demolished, the pictures of saints defaced, the priests and all those who did not deny their faith were put to death; even the king and the queen ended their life by the guillotine. France was no longer permitted to believe in a God, an abandoned woman was placed upon the altar and adored as the goddes of reason.

(5.) Things bear a similar aspect in our days. How great is the number of unbelievers who assert that there is no God, no heaven, no hell, that the soul is mortal, that man is nothing but a rational animal, and that all things end with death! How many there are who reject all revealed religion, who deny the divinity of Christ and believe only what they can comprehend with their weak reason, obscured by many passions' These, and with them many others, hate the Catholic Church and would prefer to see it

destroyed to-day rather than to-morrow. The weapons which they use in their war against the Church are the same as those employed in the last century, falsehood and calumny, cunning and brute force. Who can number the falsehoods and calumnies which irreligious and infidel papers propagate against the Church, her doctrines, ministers and institutions? No matter how frequently these lies and calumnies are refuted, as many new ones arise, for the enemies of our faith act according to the maxim: "Throw plenty of dirt; some will stick." If circumstances demand it, they have recourse first to cunning, then to brute force, in order tc execute their satanic projects the more effectually. They endeavor to withdraw the schools from the influence of the Church with a view to demoralize them and to cause the rising generation to grow up in unbelief. The same they intend to do with regard to Christian families; civil mariage is to take the place of the ecclesiastical ceremony. Thus parents with their children are to be estranged from the Church and led into infidelity. In order to weaken Catholic life, these enemies of the Church desire all confraternities and religious societies to be dissolved, processions abolished, and every public manifestation of religion to be abrogated. In some countries, as in Mexico, Brazil and Switzerland, our enemies have already resorted to open violence, priests have been exiled, the people deprived of their churches and even hindered from holding services in private houses; no Catholic priest is allowed to baptize, to say mass, to hear confessions, or to administer to the sick and dying the consolations of religion. Infidels and free-thinkers would everywhere enact the same scenes if they had the power, for their design is the destruction and extirpation of the Catholic Church and of all Christianity.

2. *The danger of losing yo r faith.*

(a.) It is true the Catholic Church can never perish, for Christ has promised that the gates of hell shall never prevail against her, but the individual Catholic has not this assurance: he may lose his faith and become a prey to unbelief. The enemies of the Church have already succeeded in infecting numerous Catholics with their pernicious maxims and causing them to waver in their faith. In large cities, where the enemies of the faith find a particularly fertile soil, there are numbers of free-thinkers and men who have no more faith than had the pagans of old. In almost every congregation you find people who are Catholic only in name. What has happened to these unfortunate victims of infidelity can also befall you; you may lose your faith and with it your salvation and eternal happiness.

(£.) How necessary it is, therefore, for you to watch, and to "stand fast in the faith."—*I. Cor.* 16; 13. Examples of constancy

in the faith: The holy martyrs who sacrificed property, liberty and life for the faith; the Catholics of Ireland. Three hundred years ago, when the great defection from the Catholic Church took place, the new doctrine was to be introduced into Ireland The practice of the Catholic religion was strictly prohibited. Catholics were deprived of their churches; convents and monasteries were secularized, bishops and priests banished or put to death. There was not a single Catholic school throughout the land and parents were forbidden to have their children instructed and educated in foreign countries. The property of Catholics was confiscated and they themselves only permitted to rent their lands lor thirty-one years; they were obliged to pay an exorbitant rent for the land that lawfully belonged to them, and could be ejected by Protestants. This oppression, with but little mitigation, lasted for three hundred years. One would think that the Catholic faith would have entirely perished in Ireland, but this was not the case; the faithful Irish permitted themselves to be deprived of everything buttheir faith, they suffered every imaginable evil, but they remained as firm and immovable in their faith as the rock on which their Church is built. Should not such examples encourage you to stand up manfully for the Catholic Church and to let your heart be torn out of your body rather than the faith out of your heart? Be not only firm in faith, *but also fulfil yout duties as Catholics.*

Part II.

I. As Catholics it is our duty—

To keep the commandments of God. How is it with us? Have we conscientiously fulfilled this duty during the past year? Blessed are we if we can assure ourselves that we were solicitous throughout the whole year to do the will of God in all things. The remembrance of the past year will be for us a sweet consolation, not only now but also on our dying bed, and alleviate our journey into eternity. But how many there are among us who must confess to-day that during the past year they have not served God, but have grievously offended him. (Here speak of the sins which are most frequently committed, such as impurity, vanity in dress, drunkenness, cursing, blaspheming, discord, enmity, fraud, dishonesty in dealings, injustices, slander, detraction and immodest discourses.·) Thus on this, the first day of the year, many stand as sinners before Christ, our Redeemer and Judge, present here in the tabernacle. How wretched the state of these persons! If they had died during the past year, where would they be now? Where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Oh, that they would avail themselves of the new year for their

reconciliation with God and for the salvation of their soul. And why? Because what happened to many in the past year may happen to them in the present—they may die during the course of it, perhaps suddenly and unexpectedly, without the priest, without the sacraments, or as sham penitents whose perdition is certain. Consider the words of the wise man: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For his wrath shall come on a sudden; and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee."—*Ecclus.* 5; 8, 9.

2. *To make a diligent use of the means for our sanctification.* Such means are—

(a.) *Prayer.* "Fish," says St. Chrysostom, "cannot live out of the water; they die in a very short time. In like manner the soul of man cannot live without prayer, she dies little by little." And St. Augustine says: "Prayer is the nourishment of the soul, for as the body cannot live without food so the soul cannot preserve her life without prayer." What use have you made of these means during the past year? In regard to your private devotions, have you said your morning and evening prayers every day? In regard to your devotions in church, did you hear mass regularly on Sundays and holidays? Did you strive to keep your thoughts collected and to pray devoutly? There will be scarcely one among us who in this respect has no reason to accuse himself. Hence it will be necessary for us to-day to make good resolutions to fulfil our duty in regard to prayer during the coming year more zealously than heretofore.

(£.) *The hearing of the word of God, and spiritual reading.* Our divine Saviour says: "He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore, you hear them not, because you are not of God."—*John* 8: 47. How many there are now-a-days who do not hear the word of God at all, though it is preached every Sunday and holiday. How many there are who hear it without attention, without forming a good resolution to regulate their lives according to its teachings. How many sleep during the sermon. If your conscience accuses you of anything, amend your life, and in the new year listen diligently to the word of God and endeavor to live according to it. Especially do not neglect spiritual reading on Sundays and holidays, in order to become better instructed in religion and to be urged on to a pious life. Many never read a spiritual book during the year, but spend their leisure time in frivolous amusements, or in reading novels or irreligious papers. Do not follow their example.

(c.) *Confession and Communion.* These two Sacraments are the most necessary and efficacious means by which we are preserved

from sin, and moreover they increase our zeal for the service of God and help us to attain perfection. He who is careless in the reception of these sacraments, who confesses and receives communion only once a year, at Easter, and even then more from compulsion than free will, is of the number of lukewarm Catholics. Such a one is frequently lost in sins and vices, and the greatest fear is to be entertained for his salvation. If in the past year, and in general during your past life, you have been lukewarm and negligent in regard to confession and communion, endeavor during the new year to become more zealous; confess and receive communion as often as possible, and always with a heart well prepared.

3. *Finally, to fulfil conscientiously the duties of our state of life.*

(fl.) Each person is in a certain station of life and therefore has certain duties to perform. If he properly fulfils his duties as a Catholic, but neglects the duties of his state of life, he would be unable to render a satisfactory account to God at the last day, and would be placed among the reprobate. For example: Heli, who of himself was a just, good, religiously disposed man, but on account of the neglect of his duties as a father was very probably rejected. "For if I preach the gospel, it is no glory to me," says the Apostle, that is, I have nothing to glory in, because I do no more than my duty, "for a necessity lieth upon me: for woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel."—*I. Cor.* 9: 16. As St. Paul was chosen by God to be an Apostle, it was his duty to preach the gospel; hence he was indefatigable in his office of preaching, enduring tribulations and sufferings of every description, for he feared eternal misery if he neglected his duty.

(3.) How is it with you? Have you hitherto diligently fulfilled the duties of your state of life? Parents, have you strenuously endeavored to give your children a Catholic education? Have you never permitted them to do wrong? Have you admonished them to good? Have you exhorted them to pious exercises, such as prayer, going to church, the reception of the sacraments, etc.? Have you given them a good example, or have you been the cause of scandal to them? Sons and daugthers, have you honored, loved and obeyed your parents? Have you not grieved them by stubbornness, rudeness or bad conduct? Let every one, in whatever station of life he may be, examine himself to-day and see whether he has fulfilled his particular duties, and let him resolve in the new year zealously and earnestly to amend his faults.

PERORATION.

This is my new year's wish, and I earnestly beg you to lay it to heart. Love your mother, the Catholic Church, as good children love their mother, and rem' in loyal to her all the days of your life, to your last brer .l Show that you are Catholics who value your faith above all things, and be ready and willing to make any and every sacrifice for it. Fulfil your duties as good Catholics, and walk according to the rules of your faith. Keep the commandments of God, make use of the means which the Church offers you for your sanctification, and be faithful in the discharge of the duties of your state of life. I commend you all both for the new year and for all the future years of your life to God's holy keeping, and conclude with the words of the Apostle: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."—*II. Cor.* 13: 13.

THE EPIPHANY.

Lesson.—Zr. 60: 1-6. Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, darkness shall coverthe earth, and a mist the peoples: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thy eyes round about, and see: all these are gathered together, they are come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Then shalt thou see and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee, the multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Madian and Epha: all they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense, and showing forth praise to the Lord.

Gospel.—*Matt.* 2: 1-12. When Jesus was bom in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of king Herod, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore him. And king Herod hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling together all the chief priests, and the Scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born. But they said to him: In Bethlehem of Juda, for so it is written by the prophet: And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda for out of thee shall come forth the ruler, who shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, privately calling the wise men, learned diligently of them the time of the star which appeared to them. And sending them into Bethlehem, said: Go, and diligently enquire after the child: and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore him. Who having heard the king, went their way: and behold, the star, which they had seeu in the East, went before them, until it came and stood over where the child was. And, seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they

found the child with Mary his mother: and falling down, they adored him: and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having received an answer in sleep, that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country.

FIRST SKETCH.

THE STARS WHICH GOD CAUSES TO APPEAR TO MEN FOR THEIR SALVATION.

We have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore him.—Matt. 2:2.

We see to-day the three Wise Men from the East adoring the new-born Saviour as the Redeemer of the world and offering him gifts. How did these men know that the Saviour of the world was born? They themselves tell us: "We have seen his star in the East, and we are come to adore him." According to Balaam's prophecy a star was to appear at the time of the birth of Christ. This prophecy was known all over the East: "A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel. Out of Jacob shall he come that shall rule."—*Numb.* 24: 17, 19. Hence, when the three kings saw this wonderful star in the heavens, they knew, being interiorly enlightened by God, that the Redeemer of the world was born. They at once started on their journey, went to Jerusalem, and thence to Bethlehem, where they found the divine Child, adored him most profoundly, and offered him gold, frankincense and myrrh. Thus the prediction of the royal prophet was fulfilled: "The kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents: the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts."—*Ps. "jw* 10. As God caused the star of Bethlehem to appear to the three wise men, so in our days he causes stars to appear to men, pointing out to them the way of salvation. All depends upon our following these stars willingly and constantly, as did the sages from the East. Of these stars I shall speak to you to-day, and answer the two following questions:

I. Which are these stars?
II. How must we follow them?

The stars by which God leads us to salvation are sometimes *interior;* that is, such as can be perceived only in spirit; and sometimes *exterior,* which are perceived by the bodily senses.

Part I.

i. *Interior stars are—*

(a.) *The supernatural light ofgrace,* which arises, as it were, as a star and illumines man's understanding so that he can clearly perceive what is good and pleasing to God, and what he must do in order to work out his salvation. St. Augustine was one day sitting in the shade under a fig-tree to rest himself. Whilst sitting there, his sins came before his mind so vividly and grieved him so much that he wept bitterly, for although he had not as yet the true faith his conscience told him that he was a great sinner. In his affliction he suddenly heard a voice, saying to him: *Tolle et lege,* "Take and read." He hastened into his house, opened the Sacred Scriptures and read the words of the Apostle St. Paul: "The night is passed, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting aud drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences."—*Rom.* 13: 12-14. 'T had scarcely read these words," he writes in his Confessions, "when suddenly a ray of light entered my heart, expelled the darkness and gave me peace." Shortly afterwards he was converted. Thus God causes a star to rise in the hearts of all men from time to time that they may clearly see what is for their salvation.

(£.) The supernatural ponoer ofgrace, which strengthens the will of man and in various ways op-rates upon him in order to move him to avoid evil and to do good. At one time it reminds us of the shortness of this life, of death and of judgment; then it strives to win us to God and to confirm us in his service by representing to us his infinite goodness, the bitter passion and death of Christ, and the unspeakable joys of heaven. We are often in such a frame of mind that we seem to have lost all pleasure and joy in the world, its goods and amusements, and feel a hearty longing for God and heavenly things. Thus God seeks to direct the will of man to good; he knocks, as it were, at the door of his heart, seeking admittance. The deeper they are buried in sin the more solicitous God is to seek them, for he wills not the death of the sinner but that he be converted and live. These are the two interior stars of grace, which appear to all men without exception. If you gaze upon the heavens at night you will see two stars which always remain together, Castor and Pollux. Thus also the two interior stars of grace are always together, for grace always produces the two following effects: As a supernatural light it

enlightens the understanding, and as a supernatural power it excites and strengthens the will to good.

2. *Exterior stars* are—

(a.) *Temporal blessings.* When God sends prosperity to man his object and will is that man should gratefully turn to him, the Giver ot all good, and fervently serve him. And it is certain that by the temporal blessing of God some have been moved to abandon their sinful life and to enter upon the path of virtue. This star, however, does not always produce the desired effect Many make use of temporal blessings and prosperity for the gratification of their base passions, and for the commission of various sins and vices. For example: the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha. Therefore God causes other stars to appear to men.

(Æ.) *Calamities, afflictions, tribulations and sufferings.* These are especially calculated to withdraw man from the world and from sin, and to turn him to God, the source of all consolation, the helper in every need. Who were they that most frequently visited Jesus and had recourse to him? Was it not the sick, the suffering, the unfortunate, the sorely oppressed ? Their sufferings, like a star, led them to Christ, and with him they found relief both for body and soul. Is it not so in our days ? Many continue to sin from year to year, nothing makes an impression upon them, they despise every grace; suddenly God sends them some great affliction, they lose their house and home, fall sick and are doomed to spend many days on a weary bed of pain. All at once a light arises for them, they perceive and bewail their errors, renounce their dissipations and debaucheries and do penance. With justice, therefore, St. Bonaventure says: "Many do not return to God unless they are, as it were, compelled by tribulations."

(ci) Salutary lessons and admonitions which they receive from priests in thepulpit or in theconfessional, or by reading spiritual books. These stars conduct many to salvation. Call to mind the sermon of St. Peter on the day ot Pentecost, which caused three thousand Jews to be converted to the Christian faith ; and the sermon of Jonas, when all the inhabitants of Nineve did penance in sackcloth and ashes. How many Catholics even in our days are moved by sermons and the admonition of priests in the confessional to abandon their sinful life and to do penance ! What salutary stars spiritual books are, many examples, as well as history, prove. Was not St. Ignatius by reading the lives of the saints so inflamed with the love of God that he left the world, founded the Society of Jesus, and became a great saint ? A similar

example we have in St. John Colombini, a wealthy merchant of Siena, who also afterwards became the founder of a Religion! Order and a great saint.

(d.) The Holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, These two sacraments are pre eminently stars of salvation; for they are the means ordained by Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin and preservation therefrom. If we had not the Sacrament of Penance, very few grown up persons would be rescued from perdition, since nearly all in the course of life lose the grace of baptism by grievous sins, and render themselves liable to eternal damnation. If we had not the Blessed Eucharist, the sacra..ent which is most replete with all graces would be wanting; the sacrament through which we are most intimately united with Jesus Christ, the dispenser of all graces, and so fortified that we can say with the Apostle: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword ?" That these interior and exterior stars of grace may lead us to salvation, we must follow them as the Wise Men from the East followed the star which guided them to the crib of the new-born Saviour. But how must we follow them ?

Part II.

We must follow the stars of grace—

I. *Promptly.*

(a.) The three kings prepared for their journey as soon as they saw the star in the heavens and understood its significance, following it whither it led them. And it was well that they hastened, for had they delayed they would very probably not have found the divine Infant in Bethlehem, and no one would have been able to give them any information as to his whereabouts ; thus they probably would never have come to the knowledge of the Redeemer and been saved.

(£.) We also, as soon as God calls us by a star, should follow without delay and allow nothing to detain us. When one of the disciples who wished to follow Christ, said : "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," Jesus replied to him: "Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead."—*Matt.* 8: 21, 22. Behold, our Lord desires us to follow him immediately when he calls. Now the first requisite is fulfilled by very few. Stars appear to all, but very few follow them without delay. The grace of God has often enlightened you, my friend, so that you perceived and

understood well the dangerous condition of your soul and the evil you were doing; his grace also urged you to avail yourself of the mercy of God and to rescue your dearly-bought soul from perdition. You were aroused and .resolved to do penance, but you thought, not now, but at some future time. And what happened? In the meanwhile the star disappeared; the salutary illuminations and impressions of grace ceased, you relapsed into your former carelessness, into the old forgetfulness of your salvation and nothing has come of your conversion. Who can number the Catholics who on account of delaying their conversion have remained in sin? What is the sad consequence of this delay? Nothing less than that many die impenitent and unconverted and perish eternally. "Delay not, but strive to reach the safe port of penance and conversion, that no storm may overtake you suddenly, no unprovided death bury you in floods and plunge you into the abyss of hell."—37. *Peter Damian.*

2. *With courage and perseverance.*

(a.) The three kings were obliged to journey many days in order to reach the crib of Jesus. Numerous difficulties presented themselves; their way lay through sterile countries; they could find no suitable stopping places and often had to camp out at night. How frequently they may have asked on their journey when they arrived in the land of the Jews: Where is the new-born king of the Jews? and nobody could give them the desired information! How often they may have been laughed at on account of this question! But it matters not, they are determined and cannot be dissuaded. They go without delay, seek, find and adore him whose star they had seen.

(Æ.) We also must courageously and perseveringly follow the stars which God sends us for our salvation. We know well what we should do, our conscience makes known to us our duty plainly enough; and knowing our obligations we must not hesitate or delay; we must not fear to do our duty. We must strive to overcome all obstacles, for Christ says: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."—*Matt.* 11: 12. Heaven is worth laboring for; man exerts himself so much in order to obtain worldly possessions which are to-day and to morrow vanish, and which can never satisfy the heart; why, then, should anything be too hard for us if thereby we obtain that happiness in heaven which surpasses all conception and lasts for ever? How small the number of those who are prepared to make every sacrifice for heaven. They count the cost; they would follow Christ on the way to heaven—but on a way strewn with roses. Many declare themselves at once ready to follow him when

he says: "Come, and follow me," but when he adds: "You must be meek, humble, patient, chaste, peaceful; you must shun the joys of the world, mortify yourself, and crucify the flesh with its concupiscences"—they quickly turn to the flesh-pots of Egypt, such as lust, riches, sensual pleasures and the empty joys of the world. Oh, let us not follow in the footsteps of sensual and effeminate Catholics. Christ is the star, which shines for us, let us follow him on the way of the cross, the way which alone leads to heaven.

3. *Finally, we must be ready and willing to make any and every sacrifice.*

(a.) The sages from the East left their wives, children, friends, home with all its associations, and followed the star. Nothing could dissuade them, neither love for wife and child nor attachment to their worldly possessions; they sacrificed everything in order to find the divine Child.

(3.) Wt also must not count the cost of obedience. When our Lord calls we must follow him like the disciples in the gospel, who left all that they possessed and followed Christ. Hence he says: "He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son and daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me."—*Matt.* 10: 37, 38. The love for God must be greater than the love for father, mother, or son or daughter; for the love of him we must make every sacrifice, even that of life. How differently do many Catholics think and act? They have been dishonest in their dealings with their fellow-men, have committed injustices, and, therefore, should make restitution or repair the damage, but this they cannot resolve to do. They choose rather to go to h^ll than comply with the duty of restitution. They are addicted to impurity or drunkenness and are bound to renounce the vice at any cost, but they feel tl emselves too weak, and they are weak because they have not a strong will; they choose rather to perish eternally than to live chastely or soberly. They nourish hatred and envy in their heart when they should control these inordinate passions and love their neighbor sincerely; but this is too difficult for them; they prefer to be lost for ever rather than be reconciled to their enemies, sincerely forgiving and loving them.

PERORATION.

Oh, do not act thus; consider the stars which God sends you for your salvation and follow them without delay, for you know

not the time of their duration. If the Wise Men had delayed, hor fatal might have been their hesitation! Their star would have perhaps disappeared, they would never have recognized the voice of God calling them, ano would never have to come to the knowledge of the true God. Therefore, whatever may be your age, do not put off the aftair of your salvation, because nothing is so uncertain as the future, and thousands of those who deferred their conversion from one time to another have been cut off by death and are lost for ever. "To day, if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts."—*Ps.* 94: 8. Follow the stars of salvation with courage and preseverance, fear not the difficulties which attend those who follow Christ, and be prepared to make any and every sacrifice for the salvation of your soul. Labor, suffer, combat for justice's sake, for heaven is worth it all. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

HOW WE SHOULD WORK OUT OUR SALVATION ACCORDING TO THE EXAMPLE OF THE WISE MEN.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Juda in the days of King Herod, behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem. —*Matt.* 2: 1.

Jesus Christ became man in order to redeem and to save all men, both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, it is true, were the first to whom the fruits of redemption were to be imparted; for this reason he was born in their country, and his advent was announced to them by the angels. Shortly afterwards he also revealed himself to the Gentiles by calling the Wise Men from the East. That these pious men recognized in the new-born Infant the Son of God and the promised Redeemer we cannot doubt, for they showed him divine honour by falling down and adoring him. The gifts too which they offered him manifested their belief in his dignity as the Messias, for they offered him gold as King, frankincense as God, and myrrh as man. As we are descendants of the Gentiles, this feast reminds us of the grace of our vocation to Christianity, and the three kings are our fathers in the faith. We also have reason to day to thank our divine Saviour sincerely for having from among so many millions of Gentiles chosen and brought us into the Catholic Church. Let us not, however, forget that although he has called us without any merit of our own, he will not save us without our merit. If we wish to attain the end

of our vocation we must work out our salvation according to the example of the three holy kings—

I. Without delay;
II. h uh perseverance.

Part I.

1. *Without delay.* The gospel tells us of a wonderful star which appeared in the East at the time of the birth of our divine Saviour. Without doubt all the inhabitants of the East saw this star, and many of them knew its signification. For throughout the East the belief was universal that the Redeemer of the world would appear in the land of the Jews and herald his coming by a wonderful star. Many of those who saw it and knew its signification may also have been willing to visit the new born Saviour, but not then, after a while, at a more convenient time. Not so the three holy kings. They no sooner saw the star and perceived its significance than they started on their journey. Neither temporal affairs, nor the season of the year, which was unfavorable for traveling, nor the dangers and difficulties of the journey, nor the example of their countrymen, could shake them in their resolution; they started without delay on their journey. Arrived at Jerusalem, they inquired: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the East, and we are come to adore him." To see the star and start on their journey was one and the same thing. Suppose they had deferred going, what would have been the consequence? Their journey would have been omitted either altogether, or they would not have found the divine Saviour at Bethlehem; the star would, perhaps, have disappeared and they would never have known which way to go, or who was calling them.

2. From this we see how necessary it is that we attend to the affair of our salvation without delay. He who does not do this exposes himself to the danger of dying a miserable death, and of being lost for ever. Why?

(a.) *For want of time.* How little he who defers the affair of his salvation can reckon and rely upon time is expressed most clearly in the Sacred Scripture: "Man knoweth not his own end; but as fishes are taken with the hook, and as birds are caught with a snare, so men are taken in the evil time, when it shall suddenly come upon them."—*Eccltes.* 9: 12. And our Lord says: "Be you also ready, for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come."—*Luke* 12: 40. And St. Paul says: "For your-

selves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, peace and security, then shall sudden destruction come upon them, as the pains upon her that is with child, and they shall not escape."—*I. Thes.* 5: 2-3. Sinners especially are often overtaken unexpectedly by death. Examples: the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha; the sons of Heli, Ophni and Phinees; Absalom. If death does not come suddenly, it comes unexpectedly upon most people, for all, even the aged and those dangerously sick, still promise themselves a longer life. Many a one who will die to-day firmly believes that to-morrow he will rise and spend a few hours out of bed. Many a one who clothes himself in the morning and goes from place to place, will in the evening lie on his bed and die. How wrongly do those act who always defer the affair of their salvation! They are in the greatest danger of being overtaken by death and of dying miserably. How many are burning in hell who foolishly thought, "there is time yet; later on when the days of my youth are past; when my condition in life is changed, I will set my conscience in order, and begin to serve God zealously." Unhappy souls! Whilst they consoled themselves with such thoughts and continued to sin, they suddenly died and awoke in hell.

(£.) *From want of good will.* If a person has sinned only once or twice he is aware of the sinful and dangerous condition into which he has fallen, and feels most unhappy. His conscience bitterly reproaches him, he thinks of death and judgment, suffers great anguish and has no rest until he has made a good confession and reconciled himself to God. But when he has frequently relapsed, his sensations of fear and terror, and his remorse of conscience become weaker; finally, he thinks little or nothing of sin, and goes so far as to commit the greatest crimes without being in the least disquieted: "The wicked man when he is come into the depths of sin, contemneth."—*Prov.* 18: 3. Thus the sinner who always defers the affair of his salvation, accumulating sin upon sin, resembles the man who saw a lion for the first time. The sight of this savage beast so terrified him that he was almost frightened to death, and trembled like an aspen leaf. When he saw him again he was still somewhat frightened, but not as much as the first time, and the oftener he saw him, the more his fear decreased, until finally he could look at him quite fearlessly, and wondered that he allowed himself to be terrified. Now if things have gone so far with the sinner that he no longer perceives and feels his misery, then he has no longer the will to free himself from it by penance; he perseveres in evil and is lost. Do with him what you please, promise him heaven, threaten him with hell, admonish him earnestly to amend his life, all is in vain,

he has lost the will to amend and to be converted; therefore, he continues to sin and his end is perdition.

(/.) From want of extraordinary grace. God gives to all men as many graces as they need in order to work out their salvation, for "The Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance."—*II. Pet.* 3: 9. We may therefore believe for certain, that even the greatest sinners so long as they live receive from God the graces necessary for salvation. But these ordinary graces are without effect; they need very great, in fact, extraordinary graces, if they are to be brought to repentance, because in consequence of their long, sinful life, they are thoroughly obdurate and obstinate. Such graces, however, they must not expect of God, because they have rendered themselves unworthy of them. As the sun at this season of the year is unable to heat the earth covered with snow and ice, and to render it productive, so the ordinary graces which God gives to such sinners cannot soften their cold, hard hearts, and produce in them fruits of true repentance. They live and die in sin and forgetfulness of God, and are delivered over to eternal perdition. If, therefore, you sincerely desire the salvation of your soul, guard against nothing so much as delaying your conversion. Take the three Wise Men for your model, and without delay set out on your journey to Christ and to heaven. Walk with perseverance.

Part IL

1. The three kings could not travel as conveniently as we can now a days. There were no levelled roads from one country to another, they were obliged to find out the way, passing through immense forests and deserts. They had no coaches, and inns for the accommodation of travellers were unknown. Thus their journey was anything but pleasant; on the contrary, it was beset with many dangers and difficulties. These, however, they did not pause to consider; they started on their journey and with constancy prosecuted it until they arrived at Jerusalem. There the star, which had been a friendly guide to them on their way, disappeared. They asked in Jerusalem: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" No one could give them the desired information; they even noticed that their question alarmed King Herod and the Jews, and that danger threatened them. What should they do? Return? Oh, no; the obstacles they met rather increased their zeal; they did not cease inquiring until they ascertained the birth place of Jesus Christ. They proceeded to Bethlehem, and there it was that their perseverance was most richly

rewarded, They found the divine Child, prostrated themselves before him, and adored him most profoundly.

2. In like manner we must persevere in our attention to the affair of our salvation.

(λ.) This perseverance is absolutely necessary. It is of paramount importance. Suppose the Wise Men had set out on their journey, but had returned on account of the obstacles they had to encounter before they reached Bethlehem, their undertaking would have profited them nothing; they would not have come to Jesus any more than their countrymen, who did not attempt the journey. In like manner it will profit us nothing to begin the work of our salvation if we do not prosecute and complete it. Our Blessed Lord does not promise eternal salvation to those who begin well, but to those who persevere in good to the end: "He that shall persevere unto the end, shall be saved."—*Matt,* io; 22. And again: "Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life."—*Afioc.* 2: 10. He declares that all those who do not perseveringly walk in the way of virtue, are unfit for heaven: "No man, putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.—*Luke* 9 : 62. If a person were to serve God for a number of years with all possible fervor, and acquire a great multitude of merits, but afterwards fall into mortal sin and die in that state, he would be irretrievably lost: "If the just man shall turn away from his justice, and shall commit iniquity.... he shall die in his sin, and his justices which he hath done, shall not be remembered."—*Ezcch.* 3 : 20. Examples: The fallen angels; King Saul; Judas, These all commenced well, but they did not persevere in good; therefore they were rejected. There is not one Catholic amongst the lost souls who did not commence well, for all were purified and sanctified in the Sacrament of Baptism; yet countless Catholics are burning in the abyss of hell. Why? Because they did not persevere in virtue, they lost their baptismal innocence, lived and died in sin, and perished eternally.

(b.) But can we attend to the affair of our salvation and persevere in the service of God unto the end? Who can doubt it? It is the earnest will of God that all men be saved, therefore, he gives to all, without exception, as many graces as are necessary for their salvation. On our part nothing else is required than to ask God for his grace, and to make good use of it. If we do this we shall surely accomplish the work of our salvation, although it is a hard, difficult task, and costs many struggles and much self-denial. Let us only read the lives of the saints; they had the same difficulties as we have, and many of them had

even greater difficulties to encounter, and greater obstacles to overcome, than we; and yet they served God with the greatest fidelity to the last moment of their life. What they were able to do, we also can do, since the necessary grace is no more wanting to us than it was to them. And if the people of the world exert themselves so much in order to enjoy a life of happiness, which in truth is nothing else than vanity, and ends in eternal death, should not we be willing in attending to the affair of our salvation to make some sacrifices, since goods and joys are in store for us which are incomparably and infinitely more precious, and last for ever? Should we not feel ourselves encouraged and strengthened when we consider the words of St. Paul: "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."—*IL Cor.* 4 :iy. When St. Adrian, a young soldier of eighteen years, saw the constancy of the martyrs under the most cruel tortures, filled with amazement, he asked some of them what good they expected from such horrible pains. They replied: "We hope for such goods as surpass all that can be imagined. This gives us courage to endure even the worst pains with joy and exultation. This hope sweetens the bitterness of our tortures, so that we would cheerfully give a thousand lives, if we had them. The evils of this life will not last for ever, but the happiness which we confidently expect will be eternal." Adrian was deeply moved by this answer, received baptism, and shortly after offered his life to Jesus Christ as a martyr.

PERORATION.

Turn your eyes to the three holy kings, your fathers in the faith, and follow them. Begin the work of your salvation at once, for delay is dangerous. You are not secure against death at any moment, neither do you know whether you will always be in a good disposition and receive an extraordinary grace for your conversion. If you have once begun the affair of your salvation, do not desist so long as life lasts. Should difficulties and obstacles present themselves, do not despond; God's grace is all-powerful to assist you in persevering to the end. Only have a good will, persevere in prayer, and make use of every means of grace, and like the three Wise Men you will receive the reward of your fidelity in heaven. Amen.

THIRD SKETCH.

THE SIGNIFICATION OF THE FEAST.

There came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is he that is born king of the Jews?—Matt. 2:1.

The feast of the Epiphany, which means *manifestation,* dates back to the earliest ages of the Church, and in the Eastern Church was celebrated on the same day as Christmas, until the middle of the fourth century. In the Western Church both feasts were celebrated separately from the beginning; Christmas on the 25th of December, and the Epiphany on the 6th of January. After a time the Eastern Christians conformed to the custom observed in the Western Church. Both feasts, however, are closely connected, for the feast of the Epiphany is nothing else than the development and glorification of the feast of Christmas. For whilst Jesus Christ appeared to the Jews on Christmas Day, he manifested himself to the Gentiles on the Epiphany, when he called the Wise Men to adore him, they being the first of heathen nations to worship the true God. Nearly all Christians being descended from heathen forefathers, we find it only natural that this festival should be celebrated with great splendor throughout Christendom, particularly in Rome, once the metropolis of paganism, now the centre of the Christian world. This festival was celebrated at all times with great solemnity, and history informs us that on this day the emperors Julian and Valence, who were far from being imbued with a religious spirit, assisted at public worship. By way of instruction on this feast I will explain to you *its significance—*

I. In itself, and
II. In regard to us.

Part I.

On the feast of the Epiphany we celebrate the *manifestation of Jesus Christ as God, particularly to the headhens.* This is the signification of this festival which St. John expresses in these words: "We saw his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."—*John* 1: 14.

1. There are three conspicuous events by which, in his hidden life and at the beginning of his public life, Jesus Christ manifested his divinity and dignity as the Messias:

(e.) The appearance of the miraculous star;

(Æ) His baptism by John the Baptist in the river Jordan, **and**

(r.) His first miracle at the marriage in Cana.

(a.) The appearance ofthe miraculous star. When Jesus Christ was born, Wise Men came from the East to Jerusalem inquiring: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the East and are come to adore him." Having received the answer that Christ would be born in Bethlehem of Juda, "behold, the star, which they had seen in the East, went before them, until it came and stood over where the child was." And entering into the house, they found the divine Child, and enlightened by the Holy Ghost, they believed him to be the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Therefore, falling down they adored him and offered him gold, frankincense and myrrh. Thus the prophecy of the Psalmist was fulfilled: "Before him the Ethiopians shall fall down . . . the kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents; the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts."—Pj. 71:9, 10. This is the first event by which Jesus Christ immediately after his birth manifested himself not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles.

(3.) *His baptism by John the Baptist in the river Jordan.* Immediately before his public life Jesus Christ went, at the age of thirty, to his precursor, John, who was preaching penance and baptizing in the river Jordan, to be himself baptized by him. At this baptism great and important signs appeared: "Lo, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him. And, behold, a voice from heaven, saying : This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—*Matt.* 3 : 16-17. This is another manifestation, or Epiphany; the Father and the Holy Ghost bearing testimony to his being the Son of God.

(r.) *Hisfirst miracle at the marriage in Cana,* changing water into wine. By this miracle he clearly proved that he possessed divine power and was consequently truly God, and that his doctrine deserved the fullest credence. For this reason also St. John remarks in his gospel: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory ; and his disciples believed in him."— *Johni'.* 11.

These are the three events, by which Jesus Christ manifested himself as the Redeemer even before he entered upon his public life. The Church celebrates these three manifestations on this

day, as she states in the breviary, in these words: "*We* celebrate a day glorified by three miracles. On this day a star led the Wise Men to the crib; at the mariage in Cana of Galilee water was changed into wine; and on this day Christ willed to be baptized by John in the Jordan, in order to redeem us."

2. By these three events Jesus Christ manifested himself in his *threefold* dignity as king, as high priest, and as prophet.

(«.) As king. Jesus Christ is king; his kingdom is the Church which he has established and which is spread over all the earth and which will last for ever; militant here, triumphant hereafter. The prophets frequently speak of him as king, "His empire shall be multiplied; and there shall be no end of peace: he shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it and strengthen it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and for ever."—*Is.* 9: 7. Jesus Christ declared himself to be a king, for when Pilate asked him: "Art thou the king of the Jews?" he answered: "Thou sayest it." In his royal dignity he manifested himself to the Wise Men from the East: for by a divine inspiration they recognized him as the king sent by God, therefore they asked in Jerusalem: "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?"

(£.) As high-priest. Jesus Christ is truly priest, for he has offered himself for us on the cross and daily renews this sacrifice in the holy mass in an unbloody manner by the hands of his priests. Therefore the royal prophet says of him: "The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech."—*Ps.* 109: 4. St. Paul speaks of his high-priesthood in his epistle to the Hebrews, in which, among other things, he says: "Having a great high-priest that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we have not a high-priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin."—*Heb.* 4: 14, 15. Jesus Christ manifested himself as high-priest at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, for by changing water into wine he foreshadowed the holy sacrifice on our altars, where he changes bread and wine into his body and blood, thus manifesting himself as "High-Priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech."

(£.) As prophet or teacher. Finally, Jesus Christ is a prophet or teacher; for he has taught us, and continues to teach us through his holy Catholic Church what we must believe, hope for and do, in order to sanctify ourselves and be saved. Moses already designated our divine Saviour as a prophet: "The Lord thy God

will raise up to thee a prophet of thy nation and of thy brethren like unto me, him thou shalt hear."—*Deui.* 18: 15. The Jews, too, recognized him as a prophet, for they said of him: "This of a truth is the prophet indeed that is to come into the world."—*John* 6: 14. As a prophet he appeared at his baptism, for the Holy Ghost descended upon him, bearing testimony to the spirit of truth abiding in him, and the Father testified that Christ was his beloved Son, whom mankind should hear.

Thus the Church embraces in the three events which she celebrates to-day the threefold dignity which Christ possesses as the Redeemer, or the threefold office by which he has accomplished and continues to accomplish the work of redemption to the end of time. While on Christmas day he appears as the Redeemer only in a general way, on the Epiphany he indicates that he will accomplish the work of our redemption by a threefold activity as King, Priest and Prophet. Again, on Christmas day we behold him only as the Redeemer of the Jews to whom he first manifested himself, but on this feast he exhibits himself also as the Redeemer of the Gentiles in calling to himself the Wise Men from the East who were pagans. Thus the Epiphany being the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles may be justly called the continuation of Christmas, and the manifestation of the three offices with which he is invested for the accomplishment of the redemption of all mankind.

Part II.

What is this feast for us? In regard to us Epiphany is a feast which reminds us—

I. *Of our vocation to the Christian faith;* it is for us, therefore, a day of thanksgiving. Of the many millions of inhabitants on the globe, there are still eight hundred millions in the darkness of idolatry or heresy, who will be eternally lost, excepting those who perhaps on account of their good intention and disposition will be saved in an extraordinary way. You were called by God from your infancy to walk in the light of faith, and are members of the one saving Church established by Jesus Christ. Is not this a grace for which you can never sufficiently thank God throughout all eternity? After St. Augustine had been rescued from the darkness of unbelief and received into the bosom of the Catholic Church, he thanked God daily for this grace in the following words: "Truly, Lord, thou art my God who has led me out of the darkness and the shadow of death, and called me to thy wonderful light. . . Too late have I known thee, thou, my true light, ah, too late have I known thee; nevertheless, I give thee thanks for having enlightened me." You must also be

thankful to God for having called you to the Cathclic Church; esteem and love the Catholic faith above all things and do not permit anything in the world to cause you to waver; make frequent acts of faith, protesting before heaven and earth that you firmly believe all that the Church proposes to your belief, and resolve to live and die in this faith.

2. This festival reminds us of our threefold duty resulting from the threefold dignity of Jesus Christ.

(λ.) Jesus Christ is our *King,* therefore we owe him obedience. If earthly potentates demand obedience from their subjects, how much more can Jesus Christ, the King of heaven and earth, demand obedience of us? True, he sojourns no longer visibly amongst us, but he has appointed his representatives who govern in his name, and these are the Apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests. To them he said: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."—*Luke* io: i6. Therefore it is not usurping power when the pastors of the Church demand obedience in all things relating to the salvation of your souls. Oh! preserve yourselves from the contamination of the spirit of the times which rises in rebellion against the Church and revealed truths. Let Christ be your king, follow him and those whom he has appointed as his representatives upon earth—the pastors of the Church, taking to heart the words of Christ: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17. On your death-bed you will not regret having always obeyed your pastors in all things relating to the salvation of your souls.

(3.) Jesus Christ is the *High-Priest* who has redeemed us and deposited in his Church all the means of grace which are necessary for our purification and sanctification. These means of grace are especially the holy sacrifice of the mass and the sacraments. The sacrifice of the mass is the unbloody renewal of the bloody sacrifice on the cross. The holy sacraments are the channels through which the fruits of the holy sacrifice of the mass are conveyed to our souls. Through them we are either bom again as children of God, and heirs of heaven, or the wedding garment of sanctifying grace is embellished in our soul. Show your gratitude by attending holy mass whenever an opportunity offers, and by receiving the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist. These two sacraments will preserve you from every relapse into sin and enable you to advance on the path of virtue. Love to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and adore him with profound veneration and childlike confidence. St. Alphonsus says: "It is certain that after the reception of the Blessed

Eucharist, the adoration of Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, is, of all devotions, the best and most acceptable to God and the most profitable to our soul."

(r.) Jesus Christ is the *Prophet or Teacher* who has taught us by word and example what we must believe and do in order to please God and to attain our eternal destiny. Oh! how happy men would be, even in this world, if they would conform their morals to the doctrine and example of Jesus Christ. Truly, the bitter tears, which the children of Eve shed daily in their troubles and afflictions would be dried, our temporal circumstances would be ameliorated, and peace and harmony would reign supreme everywhere. Even death, which the children of the world consider the greatest evil, would be welcome to us, for it would be nothing else than a transition to a life of eternal happiness. If, therefore, you are solicitous for your welfare, do not follow the ways of the world nor conform to its teachings and maxims, "for all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (Z. *John* 2: 16), but rather conform your sentiments and your life to those of Jesus Christ; endeavor to become daily more conformable to him, that you may be made partakers of his glory in heaven. "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life."—*John* 8: 12.

PERORATION.

You now know the signification of the Epiphany both as regards the feast and ourselves. Jesus Christ on this day manifested himself not only as the Redeemer of the Jews but also of the Gentiles, and appears also to us in the threefold office which he assumed for our redemption, namely, as King, High-Priest and Prophet. Return thanks to your divine Saviour for the inestimable grace of redemption, subject yourselves to him as your King, make frequent use of the means of grace, which he as High-Priest has prepared for you, listen to him as your Teacher and follow his doctrine. The Wise Men possessed true wisdom, for they sought the light that was to come into this world, and despised the opposition of the world. For their reward they enjoy the vision of the Father, whose star they followed, the vision of the Son, whom they adored, and the vision of the Holy Ghost, whose inspirations they heeded. You must act in like manner. Follow your Father's star, the dictates of your conscience, which will guide you on the right path to the eternal Jerusalem; adore the Son under the humble form of bread in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar; follow the inspirations of the Holy Ghost by

believing· the revealed truths as proposed by the Church, who is guided and vivified by the Holy Spirit, and by not preventing him from conforming your soul to that of Jesus Christ. Amen.

FOURTH SKETCH.

GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH, SYMBOLS OF FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY.

Opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh.—Matt. 2:11.

"Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify to thee: I am God, thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices; and thy burnt-offerings are always in my sight. I will not take calves out of thy house: nor he-goats out of thy flocks. For all the beasts of the woods are mine: the cattle on the hills, and the oxen. I know all the fowls of the air: and with me is the beauty of the field. If I should be hungry, I would not tell thee for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks? or shall I drink the blood of goats? Offer to God the sacrifice of praise: and pay thy vows to the Most High. And call upon me in the day of trouble: and I will deliver thee, aud thou shalt glorify me."—*Ps.* 49: 7-15. In these words God reproved the Israelites, because they deemed it sufficient to appear before him with external gifts and he commanded them at the same time to honor him with the interior sacrifice of their heart. Our Saviour was no sooner born than he wished to teach us that he was to be adored in spirit and in truth. He calls, by the appearance of a star, never before seen in the heavens, three Wise Men from the far East to his crib. They adore him, and opening their treasures offer him precious gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh, as foretold by the prophet Isaias(6o: 6): "All they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense, and showing praise to the Lord." Why was this sacrifice so acceptable to the Lord? Gold, frankincense and myrrh being the exterior gifts of their devotion signify the liveliness of their faith, the firmness of their hope, and the fervor of their charity. This is what rendered their gifts so acceptable to God. What a beautiful lesson for us. Faith, hope and charity are the first and most necessary virtues, because they refer immediately to God, because without them no other virtue can be

practiced, and because no one can be saved unless he makes fre quent acts of faith, hope and charity. I shall speak to you to-day of the gifts of the Wise Men to the Infant Jesus, and explain to you what they symbolize, viz· :

I. Faith;
II. Hope ;
III. Charity.

Part L

Israel is without faith. God had promised the Messias to the children of Israel, and entrusted to them the predictions of the prophets, who foretold of what tribe, at what time, and where, the Messias should be born. This was to be found in the Sacred Scriptures which the Jews heard daily read in the temple. Is it possible that when he came they did not acknowledge him and believe in him I Alas, he came unto L. own, and his own received him not, Israel knew him not, he was a stranger among them, and in all Israel there was found none who had as yet paid him homage, saving a few simple shepherds, who while watching their flocks on the mountains were informed of the Saviour's birth by an angel. As the chosen people of God refused to acknow- ledge their Redeemer, the grace was given to the Gentiles, and ------- for them. Theirs was a humble and a ified by the offering of gold. But why ïγ gold to the new-born Child? They ting and offer him gold to signify that to him. They were kings themselves, g seen the star which announced to them m king they seem to forget their own ject themselves to him. They come per- ent to send ambassadors; they do not ing compels them to acknowledge him r, but as soon as his birth is made known a long and tedious journey in order to ey are also called Wise Men, sages, that j branches of science. We know how some men of our enlightened age ; full they raise many objections in order to happens that they believe what pleases ey with their limited understanding do -eject whatever appears incredible, what pacity of the human intellect, saying, professing themselves wise they become mentioned in the gospel of this day ; they see the star, feel an interior

grace which they asknowledge to be a divine revelation, and without any hesitation they humbly and firmly believe. God has spoken to them by the star; their wisdom must be silent, their learning must submit; they obey the voice of God in all humility, or to speak more plainly, they consider it the greatest wisdom to believe what the eternal and infallible God reveals, though it may appear altogether incredible and contrary to reason. St. Paul praises the faith of Abraham because he believed and hoped against hope that he would be made the father of many nations, for it was said to him, "so shall thy seed be therefore he believed that he would be made the father of many nations, though circumstances and appearances seemed to deprive him of this hope. Cannot the same praise be given to the Wise Men, who seeing the star left their country to seek the new-born king? To the humility of their faith let us add their constancy and firmness, and their sacrifice will be perfect. They come from the East to Jerusalem, whither the star leads them. As soon as they arrive in the city, Herod the king is troubled and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling the priests and ancients of the people he inquires of them where Christ should be born. Why this great surprise? Because the Wise Men had announced at their very first entrance into the city that a king was born in Juda, that they had seen his star and were come to adore him. Is not this confessing one's faith openly and without fear? They declare publicly and in the face of a suspicious and cruel king the birth of a new king. Herod, privately calling the Wise Men, inquired of them diligently the time of the star's appearance. They in turn inquire of him the birth-place of this new king of the Jews, declaring that they intend to acknowledge him as king and adore him. Their faith was great and strong in Jerusalem, but it was greater and firmer in the stable at Bethlehem. Let us follow them there in spirit. The star which they had seen in the East stood over where the child was. "And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down, they adored him." Did they behold the ensigns of a mighty king? Is the mother a mighty princess of the earth? Is the child clothed in purple? The cradle surrounded by busy attendants? No, Mary, the humble maid of Galilee, gave birth to Jesus, wrapt him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger. Did not the Wise Men, seeing him so destitute of every comfort and of all earthly friendship, think themselves deceived and return without paying him homage? No, their faith was too strong and constant, so much so as to enable them to resist all temptations. "Faith," as the Apostle says, "is the conviction of things that appear not." With the eyes of a living faith they penetrate the obscurity of the mystery, adore eternal wisdom in infancy, power in weakness, royal majesty in poverty and lowliness.

Let us look into our own hearts and examine if our faith has these qualities. By the goodness of God we have been preferred before millions of othf *s, and have been born and brought up in the true faith. Have » e always subjected our own reason and understanding to the divine word? Have we not endeavored to fathom the secrets of Providence ? Have we never doubted the truth of the divine word ? Have we never denied our faith ? Perhaps we seldom have made an act of faith, have never thanked God for the gift of faith, have neglected to be instructed in our faith, so that we do not know what we have to believe and are therefore unable to give a reason for the faith that is in us. There must be a change in our condition from this day forward if we desire to be saved. Let us offer our faith to Christ and frequently exclaim : "Jesus, we believe ; strengthen our faith and increase our fortitude."

Part II.

The Wise Men from the East offer myrrh, whereby they give us to understand that they believe the Child they adore to be mortal and subject to death, for myrrh is a figure of death. The ancients used to embalm their dead with myrrh. Thus the Wise Men honor the new-born Saviour with a sepulchre in anticipation. The prophet Isaias foretold that the Redeemer of the world would be a sign unto the Gentiles that would raise their confidence, and that these blind nations would put their trust in him. This prophecy was fulfilled on this day; the Jews were scandalized at the lowly manner in which the Messias made his appearance in the world, and as there was scarcely any one to be found in Israel who believed in him, so there were only a few who put their trust in him. But it is the lowly form of a mortal man that moves the kings to adore his humanity and to honor him with a firm hope. By this they give us to understand that they were not seeking any temporal advantage. It is divine hope that elevates our desire for those benefits, in comparison with which the riches of the world appear as contemptible, even as nothing, as the royal prophet says: "What have I in heaven ? and besides thee what do I desire upon earth! For thee my flesh and heart have fainted away; thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever. It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God."—*Ps.* 72: 25, 26, 28. The holy kings desired nothing else. They hoped to obtain from the new-born king graces and benefits, and therefore they did not hesitate to leave all earthly goods and advantages. But was not the happiness of these men already complete in the opinion of the world? They sat upon thrones, ruled countries, the soil of which was fertile and rich in gold; in a word, they had every-

thing their heart could desire. Can human heart wish for more? Can man possess more in this world? Are not sceptre and crown the highest and final ambition of man? Yet we see them leave their thrones and expose themselves to the perils of a long and tedious journey, and run the risk of having their land and thrones taken from them during their absence. And what do they seek? Is he whose star they have seen, for whom they search and whom they are come to adore, able to give them anything better and more valuable than what they already possess? Alas, the Child before whom they prostrate themselves is in the greatest poverty. His mother has not so much as the ordinary comforts for her poor Child. Wherefore, then, do these Wise Men abandon their own people and country to visit a lowly babe who is not able to give them anything? Behold herein the perfection of Christian hope which seeks nothing temporal. They behold in the divine Infant a *true man* who shall redeem mankind from the greatest of all evils, from sin; a Child who begins his life in order to die and to conquer eternal death by his death on the cross. The copious tears which course down his cheeks represent to them the streams of blood which he will shed in order to wash away the sins of the world. They consider the infinite love of God who became man to redeem mankind; and they regard this benefit as of such importance that to become partakers thereof they are ready to give up everything. Their only anxiety is to find and adore him who will bring them this exceedingly great joy. Their interior confidence thus corresponded with their exterior gift of myrrh, because they did not seek at the crib of Jesus what the world seeks, nor did they hope what the world hopes, but they manifested the great hope they placed in the death of the Redeemer and in the grace to be derived from the redemption.

What are we to learn from this? When we kneel in the presence of God and ask his help and assistance, are we not anxious in soliciting temporal blessings, but cold and indifferent when our eternal salvation is concerned? If we expected of God nothing but the gifts of grace and salvation, should we trouble ourselves about temporal concerns? would the care of the things of this world hinder us in the practice of virtue?

Part HL

God alone is to be honored by frankincense, he himself having commanded it, saying: "Thou shalt offer a burnt-offering upon the altar."—*Ex.* 29 : 13. Nearly everything that was offered to God in the Old Law had to be first incensed by the priests; to burn frankincense to another than God was the surest sign of

apostacy and idolatry; whereas to offer it to God was a sign of adoration and homage. As frankincense thrown into the fire is changed into vapor and ascends with a sweet fragrance, so the fire of divine love consumes the loving soul which soars into the presence of God. The holy kings, offering frankincense to the divine Child, give us to understand that they are inflamed with the most perfect love towards him. Notice the eagerness of their love. They see the star and at once set out on their journey. *Love is impatient,* the absence of a beloved person for a moment seems an eternity. Such is the love of the three kings that they cannot rest until they see their God. As soon as they arrive at Jerusalem they impatiently make inquiries concerning him. Their mind is occupied with him, their mouth speaks of him, their only solicitude is to find him. "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" Is not the love of these holy men like the love of the bride mentioned in the Canticles, where he says: "I will rise and will go about the city; in the streets and the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth."—3: 2. Nothing is able to moderate the ardor of this love; the star which had been their guide to Jerusalem disappears; its brilliant light is seen no more. Will they give up their journey? will they not at least delay until they again see the rays of that wonderful phenomenon? By no means; their ardent love is not to be deterred by any obstacle, they continue their journey and do not cease seeking him. The star reappears and goes before them, the sweetest consolation is poured into their hearts; the Evangelist cannot find words sufficiently expressive of their great joy, he only says: "Seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." From this we may infer that this fire of love must have been increased when they saw the divine Infant. What are their thoughts, what are their words on beholding the beautiful Babe? Their exceeding great joy in having found him whom they had so long sought renders them silent. The gospel makes no mention of what they said; their hearts were too full, they found no words to express their feelings, "falling down they adored him, and opening their treasures they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh. *Love is charitable.* They see their God destitute of all earthly friendship, of every comfort, in the greatest poverty. They are well aware that he suffers all this voluntarily, that heaven and earth are his, and the fulness thereof, consequently that he does not need their gifts. And yet they cannot go from the crib without at least having shown what pleasure it would be to them to be able to relieve him in his poverty.

PERORATION.

Let us now open the treasures of our hearts. Our God and Saviour requires of us on this day the sacrifice of true love. To refuse to make a sacrifice of our hearts to him would be the greatest ingratitude. Is it possible that there are Catholics who do not love him? What a miserable being is he who does not love the divine Child! We love men who are full of conceit and faults, and often give them all that we possess, only too frequently to have the sad experience that they are unworthy of our kindness. How foolish we are. The example of the holy kings confounds us and should open our eyes. Having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country. Let us go back another way, different from the one we came—the broad road that leads to hell—let us go back on the narrow way that leads to life eternal. Amen.

FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS.

Lesson.—*Acts* 4:8-12. In those days: Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said (to them): Ye princes of the people and ancients, hear: If we this day are examined concerning the good deed done to the infirm man, by what means he hath been made whole; be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by him this man standeth here before you whole. This is the stone which was rejected by you the builders, which is become the head of the corner: neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.

Gospel.—*Luke* 2: 21. At that time: After eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

FIRST SKETCH.

THE NAME OF JESUS AN INSTRUCTIVE AND HELPFUL NAME.

His Name was called Jesus.—Luke 2:21.

To-day, the second Sunday after Epiphany, the Church celebrates in the office, as well as in the mass, the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus. The event of which this day is the anniversary has been already commemorated on the feast of the Circumcision of our Lord, or New Year's Day; for at his circumcision the divine Child received the Name of Jesus, wherefore the gospel says: "After eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, his Name was called Jesus." At an early period many Orders celebrated a special feast in honor

of the Holy Name, but more especially the Franciscan Order, for St. Bernardine, a member of that Order, was a great lover and venerator of this Holy Name. It is related of him that at the conclusion of his sermons he would exhibit to his audience a table, on which the Name of Jesus was written in large characters, and invite them to fall upon their knees before this Most Holy Name and adore the Redeemer of mankind. Of this Holy Name I shall speak to you to-day and convince you that it is—

I. An instructive Name;
II. A helpful Name.

Part I.

The Name of Jesus is an instructive Name. Among many other things it teaches us—

i. *Humility.*

(al) God the Father gave the Name of Jesus, *i. e.,* Saviour, or Redeemer, to his Son chiefly because he humbled himself most profoundly, for the Apostle expressly says of him: "He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names."—*Phil.* 2: 7-9. Man's predominant sin was pride, he wished to be no longer dependent upon God, but would be like him and rule. In satisfaction for this enormous sin Jesus wished to humble himself most profoundly, and redeem mankind by the exercise of the most admirable humility. Is it not an incomprehensible humility and self-abasement for the Son of God to come into this world as a poor, helpless child, and to be born in a stable; to spend his whole life in the most abject poverty and lowliness, patiently to endure contumelies and insults of every kind, and even to die a most ignominious death on the cross? If an earthly prince should divest himself of all his power and majesty and humble himself, assuming the form of a poor servant, would not the world be astonished at such a spectacle? But what is an earthly prince in comparison to Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Remember also, that it was necessary to humble himself thus profoundly according to the decree of God, in order to become *our* Saviour, *i. e.,* to accomplish the work of *our* redemption. If he had not thus humbled himself, or had committed a fault against humility but once in his life, we should still be under the servitude of Satan, and should perish eternally.

(3.) Though Jesus Christ humbled himself to redeem us, yet we are not dispensed from the duty of humbling ourselves, if we desire to have the fruit of redemption applied to our souls. "God resisteth the proud, but to the humble he giveth grace."—Z *Peter* 5: 5. If the devil had humbled himself before God after his fall, he also could have been redeemed, but persevering impenitently in his pride, he was rejected for ever. It is for this reason that Christ so frequently and emphatically inculcated the necessity of humility. "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart."—*Matt.* 11: 29. To his disciples he spoke these serious words: "Amen, Isay unto you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 18: 3. And again: "Everyone that exalteth himself, shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted."—*Luke* 14: 11. Why did he reject the justice of the Scribes and Pharisees and repeatedly pronounce woe upon them? Chiefly because of their ambition and pride by which they allowed themselves to be governed. Thus the Name of Jesus teaches us chiefly the necessity of humility. As often as we pronounce this Holy Name, or think of it, we should say to ourselves: Jesus acquired his Name and accomplished our redemption by his most profound self-humiliation; consequently, from him I must learn to be humble, and to renounce all ambition and pride, to think meanly of myself; in all my actions I must avoid seeking the praise and applause of the world, patiently bearing humiliations and wishing to be the last rather than the first, for only in this way will the Name of Jesus bring grace and salvation to me.

2. *Obedience.*

(*a.* Obedience was also another means by which Jesus was to acquire his Name, as the Apostle emphatically says of him: "He humbled himself, becoming· obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names: that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth."—*Phil.* 2: 8-10. Christ was obedient to his heavenly Father. It was in obedience to his Father that he became man and appeared upon earth. Therefore he says: "Behold, I come to do thy will, O God."—*Heb.* 10:9. All that he did during his whole life upon earth was an uninterrupted exercise of obedience to his heavenly Father. "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me."—*John* 6: 38. And again: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work."—*John* 4.: 34. But Jesus was also obedient to man, he was obedient to his

mother and to his foster-father, as the gospel expressly mentions of him: "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."—*Luke* 2:51. He obeyed the Jewish and pagan authorities, he even obeyed Pilate, submitting without protest to the unjust sentence of death. Oh, how admirable is this obedience, especially if we consider the infinite dignity and majesty of Jesus Christi Yet it was necessary that he should practice this obedience that he might become our Jesus, our Saviour. Since men were disobedient to God and transgressed his holy commandments, Christ was obliged to become obedient unto the death of the cross in satisfaction for this disobedience. Therefore the Apostle writes: "As by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners: so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just."—*Rom.* 5: 19.

(Æ.) We too must practice obedience if we expect this Name to obtain for us grace and salvation. Obedience is necessary because it is a fruit of humility. Obedience and pride are as incompatible as water and fire; the proud man looks upon obedience as self-abasement; hence he will not obey, but desires to rule. We shall be convinced of the necessity of obedience, if we consider that the exercise of obedience is our first and chief duty. Now, if we do not obey in things wherein we owe obedience, we manifestly act contrary to the will of God and incur his displeasure and punishment. The Apostles were well aware of this, therefore they said to the Scribes and Pharisees who forbade them to preach in the Name of Jesus, "We ought to obey God rather than men."—*Acts* 5:29. First of all, then, obey God by keeping his commandments, obey the Church in all that regards the salvation of your soul, and willingly submit to her rules and regulations, ever mindful of the words of Christ: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." *Matt.* 18: 17. Obey your temporal authorities in everything that is not manifestly sinful, for they hold the place of God and it is his will that you obey them.

3. *Finally, patience in sufferings.*

(a.') God had decreed that man, who in consequence of sin was doomed to eternal perdition, should be redeemed, yet no less a person than the only-begotten, co-equal Son of God could accomplish the work of redemption; only a God was capable of blotting out the infinite guilt and of making reparation to divine justice. But how could the Son of God redeem man? He was to take upon himself human nature, in order to be able to suffer and die as a man, for according to the decree of Heaven the redemption could only be accomplished by his passion and death.

Jesus Christ has really complied with(this divine decree. What else was his life here below but an uninterrupted series of tribulations and suffering's? What did he not suffer at his very entrance into the world when he was born in more abject poverty than the child of the poorest laborer? What did he not suffer in his infancy, when he had to flee into Egypt from the fury and the murderous designs of Herod? What did he not suffer during his public life when insulted, calumniated, persecuted and threatened with death? Finally, what did he not suffer in the last days of his earthly life from the garden of Olives to his death on the cross? Nevertheless, his patience was as great and lasting as were his sufferings. Never could any one notice in him the least sign of impatience; though his sufferings were superabundant he remained submissive to his heavenly Father; willingly and silently took up his cross and on it consummated the sacrifice of our redemption. Hence the prophet says of him: "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth."—Zr. 53 : 7.

(3.) Herein we also must become conformable to our divine Saviour if we desire to participate in the grace of redemption. He himself says: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."—*Luke* 9 : 23. And again, "Whosoever does not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple."—*Luke* 14: 27. The way of the cross is the only way to heaven. As Jesus by his sufferings and cross has become our Redeemer, so we can partake of the fruits of redemption only by constantly following him on the cross. If our divine Redeemer had come down from the cross at the solicitation of his enemies he would have forfeited the Name of Jesus; for he could accomplish the work of redemption only by his death on the cross; in like manner he will no longer be a Saviour for us, if we do not persevere in carrying our cross. Let us not then lose patience in sufferings and afflictions, nor forget that we can enter into the kingdom of God only through many tribulations.

Part II.

The Name of Jesus affords help; for by invoking it with confidence we obtain—

i. *The object of our petition.* There is no doubt whatever that every prayer which we direct to our heavenly Father in the Name of his Son, that is, with confidence and hope in his infinite merits, will be heard, if the object of our petition be good and

salutary. Christ himself assures us: "Amen, amen, I say to you; If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you." —*John* 16: 23. Hence the Church concludes all her prayers with these or similar words: "Through Jesus Christ our Lord." Among the pagan Iberians there lived a Christian female slave who commanded their respect on account of her eminent beauty, but still more for her virtue and piety. It was customary among these ignorant heathens when a child fell sick to carry it from house to house and to inquire if any one knew of a remedy that would restore it to health. This slave also was asked if she could suggest any remedy for a child who was seriously ill. She Γβ' plied, "I know of no human remedy, but the God whom I adore gives health if it pleases him even to those who have already lost all hope of life." She prayed over the child in the Name of Jesus, and in a few moments it was restored to health. This wonderful cure was reported to the queen, and being herself afflicted with a serious malady, she commanded her attendants to carry her to this slave, who by invoking the Name of Jesus restored the queen to health. Some time after, the king, whilst hunting, was in great danger of losing his life, and calling upon Jesus, the strong and powerful God of the Christians, he was preserved. The prince as well as his people embraced the Christian religion, and posterity called this slave Christina, because she did so much for the propagation of the Christian faith. Offer all your prayers in the Name of Jesus; begin and conclude them with this salutary Name so that you may be heard.

2. *Strength in temptations.* Christ says in the gospel *{Luke* 11: 21-22): "When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things are in peace which he possesseth. But if a stronger than he come upon him, and overcome him, he will take away all his armor wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils." The strong man, who armed keeps the court of the world, is the devil, but the stronger man, who takes away all his armor, is Christ, for on the cross he destroyed the power of the devil. Christ proved his power over hell by casting out devils and by imparting this power to his Apostles and their successors. Since that time the Name of Jesus is terrible to the evil spirits. He, therefore, who fortifies himself with this holy Name need not fear the assaults of the evil one. The holy Fathers and spiritual writers all unanimously corroborate this. St. Anthony, the hermit, related to St. Athanasius that being once terribly tempted by the devil he spoke to him thus: "Truly Jesus destroys thy power, and thou, who art deprived of all the honor of an angel, art obliged to creep in th dust." The devil had no sooner heard the holy Name of Jesus than he fled. Whatever temptations you may suffer, always have recourse to Jesus and invoke his Name with confidence,

and you will be victorious in every struggle and preserve the grace of God.

3. *Comfort and assistance in sufferings.* The Name of Jesus is of wonderful assistance in all the sufferings and tribulations of life. Who can number all the frailties and diseases which the Apostles and the saints of all times have cured by the invocation of the Name of Jesus? Call to mind the lame man in Jerusalem who sat at the door of the temple begging When he addressed Peter and John as they were entering into the temple, asking them for an alms, Peter said to him: "Silver and gold I have none, but what I have, I give thee: in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk. And taking him by the right hand, he lifted him up, and forthwith his feet and soles received strength. And he, leaping up, stood, and walked."— *Acts* 3: 2-8. To invoke the holy Name of Jesus with confidence will also afford you help in your necessities and trials; Jesus is still the same today, as powerful and good, as when he cried out to the afflicted: "Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—*Matt.* 11: 28. And though God may not remove the cross from you, yet the holy Name of Jesus will comfort and strengthen you, and enable you even in sufferings to preserve peace and tranquillity in your soul. If in your sufferings you think of Jesus you must feel comforted and strengthened, for you are reminded of him who for love of you carried the heaviest cross, and who through his passion and cross opened for you a pathway into heaven; you recall to mind the love and mercy of him who has said: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."—*Matt.* 5: 5.

4. *Comfort and help in death.* Sooner or later the hour of death comes for us all. Where shall we find consolation and help in that awful hour that is to decide our fate for eternity? Where, if not in the Name of Jesus. If we fear death the Name of Jesus strengthens us; Jesus himself has tasted the bitterness of death, in order to alleviate our agony in that last hour. If the power of Satan terrifies us, belief in Jesus, who has destroyed the kingdom of the devil, strengthens us. If we tremble before the approaching judgment, the holy Name of Jesus consoles us, for our judge will be the same Jesus, our Redeemer, to whom the Father has given all judgment. If the multitude and greatness of our sins cause us anguish, Jesus again is our consolation, for he is our Mediator and Advocate with the Father. If we call upon his holy Name with faith and confidence, with a contrite heart inflamed with love, we shall certainly obtain mercy and his gracious assistance in the hour of our departure from this world; for Jesus is our only consolation in the last extremity, and the saints on

their death-bed invoked his adorable Name with their lips and in their heart, like St. Stephen, who when dying exclaimed: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."—*Acts* 7: 58.

PERORATION.

The Name of Jesus, then, is an instructive and a salutary Name. It is instructive, for it teaches us humility, obedience and patience. It is a helpful name, for in this Name our prayer is heard, we obtain strength in temptations, solace and help in the sufferings and tribulations of life, and in death. The Church desires us to invoke it frequently; for this reason, if in a state of grace we recite the Litany of the holy Name of Jesus, she grants us an indulgence of thirty days, and for the recital of the salutation: "Praise be to Jesus Christ," or responding to it: "For ever. Amen," an indulgence of one hundred days; finally, a plenary indulgence if, in the hour of death, we invoke this holy Name with a contrite heart. Never neglect to venerate the holy Name of Jesus and to invoke it with confidence in all spiritual and temporal necessities, that it may obtain for you grace and salvation, and thus the words of the Apostle will be verified in you: " Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved."—*Rom.* 10: 13. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

THE NAME OF JESUS A HOLY AND A SAVING NAME.

His Name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.—Luke 2:21.

The festival of the holy Name of Jesus, the celebration of which occurs annually on this Sunday, was first celebrated by the Franciscan Order with the permission of Pope Clement VII. At the urgent request of the Emperor Charles VI., Pope Innocent XIII., on the 29th day of November, 1721, ordained that this festival should be extended to all Christendom and be celebrated annually on the second Sunday after Epiphany. The Church has instituted this feast to increase the veneration and devotion of the faithful towards this most holy Name, to inspire them with confidence, and to urge them to venerate it. This intention of the Church is manifest from the introit of the mass: **"In the**

Name of Jesus every knee should bow of those are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."—*Phil.* 2: io, 11. The epistle mentions a lame man whom St. Peter healed by the invocation of the Name of Jesus, and the gospel (as on New Year's Day) narrates that the divine Child received the Name of Jesus. Let this Name be the subject of our meditation to-day, and let us reflect that it is—

***IA** holy,*
Π A saving Name.

Part L

In order to convince ourselves of the fact that the Name **of** Jesus is most holy, let us ask ourselves the following questions:

i. *Whence comes this Name?* Jesus did not receive his Name from man, from Mary or Joseph, nor from an angel, but from God, his heavenly Father himself; the Name of Jesus, therefore, is of divine origin. God had decreed from all eternity that his Son should become man to redeem mankind from sin and eternal damnation. The name which the Son of God should receive as Redeemer of the world was therefore associated with this decree. Hence God the Father says of him: "I will cause him to inherit an everlasting name."—*Ecclus,* 15: 6. As Christ in general is prefigured in the whole work of redemption in the Old Law, so also is his name. We have two types in particular of this holy Name: Josue or Jesus, the son of Nave, who by the greatest of miracles led the children of Israel into the land of Chanaan, and Jesus, the son of Josedeck, who together with Zorobabel conducted the Jews into the land of Israel after a captivity of seventy years in Babylon. God most assuredly revealed the name of Jesus on that gracious day on which Mary, the holy virgin, conceived the Son of God. It was then that the Archangel Gabriel said to her: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son ; and thou shalt call his name Jesus." —*Ltike* 1:31. To Joseph also an angel said: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife : for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." How holy therefore is the Name of Jesus since it comes from God himself!

2. *Who is he that bears the Name of Jesus?* Venerable to us are the names of men who occupy a high position in the world or distinguish themselves by works of art, charity or heroism.

But what are the names of earthly potentates or even of the saints compared to the Name of Jesus? Scarcely as much as a grain of sand compared with this terrestrial globe. Angels and men are only creatures, but Christ is the only-begotton Son of God, of the same essence with the Father and the Holy Ghost, true God. Therefore, when we say "Jesus," we pronounce the Name of him who is true God, and who, consequently, unites in himself all the divine perfections, such as omnipotence, eternity, omniscience, infinite sanctity and justice. Is there anything more ven /able and holy in heaven and on earth than the Name of Jesus? Must we not exclaim with the psalmist: "O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is thy name in the whole earth!"—*Ps.* 8 : 2.

3. *For whatpurpose has Jesus received his Name?* Jesus means Saviour, Redeemer. He is our Saviour or Redeemer, for he has redeemed us from sin, from the servitude of Satan and from eternal damnation. He is our Saviour, because he has merited for us salvation and all the means necessary for obtaining it. For this reason also the angel said to Joseph: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."—*Matt.* 1:21. We Christians have baptismal names, most of which have a beautiful meaning, and which remind us of the saints who bore these names, but many of us are not what our name signifies and our life does not correspond to that of our patron saint. The case is quite different with our divine Saviour; he bears his Name with the greatest justice, for he has done all that was necessary in order to merit that Name for himself. That he might be our Redeemer it was necessary for him to become man and to live in poverty, lowliness and hardships of every kind; it was necessary for him to be an example for us in every virtue, to preach his gospel to men amidst the greatest tribulations and persecutions, to endure innumerable sufferings, and finally to die a most ignominious and painful death on the cross. Such is the cost at which our divine Saviour purchased the honor of being not only called Jesus, but of being Jesus in reality. If he had refused to make but one of the sacrifices which, according to the unsearchable decree of God were necessary for our redemption, his heavenly Father would not have given him the Name of Jesus, nor could we call him by that holy appellation. To this truth the Apostle alludes when he writes: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him and hath given him a name which is above all names, that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."—*Phil.* 2: 8-ix.

The Name of Jesus then is certainly a holy Name, since it comes from God himself, since he who bears it is the Son of God, true God, and since it represents to us the work of our redemption in its whole extent. We need not wonder, therefore, that the Church annually celebrates the feast of the Name of Jesus and calls upon the faithful to reverently bow their head as often as they pronounce this holy Name. We need not wonder that the saints and all pious Christians cherished a great devotion to the Name of Jesus and on every occasion manifested the greatest reverence for it. St. Paul had so great a veneration for this Name that he mentions it no less than two hundred and nineteen times in his epistles. St. Ignatius, bishop and martyr, constantly kept this Name in his heart, and during his life continually repeated the words, 'Jesus, my love." St. Francis of Assisi did the same; he one day ordered a disciple of his to pick up the pieces of paper which were lying on the floor, lest, as he feared, the Name of Jesus might be written on some of them. Let us also venerate this holy Name with our lips and our heart Beware of pronouncing it carelessly, or irreverently, perform some devotion in honor of this Name, *e. g.*, recite the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus, and do all things in the Name of Jesus, as the Apostle exhorts you: "All whatsoever you do, in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."—*Col.* **3:17.**

Part II.

The name of Jesus is a saving Name.

1. ***It*** *protects us against Satan, against his snares and temptations.*

(a.) The Name of Jesus is the terror of hell. If it be invoked with confidence the powers of darkness tremble and are put to flight. As the gospel records, the evil spirits were always seized with great fear in the presence of Jesus; wherever he encountered them they were terrified and went out of the possessed. Christ also conferred the power of casting out devils on the faithful: "In my name they shall cast out devils."—*Mark* 16: 17. We read in the gospel that the Apostles really did cast out devils.—*Luke* 10: 17. Church history and the lives of the saints mention numerous instances in which the faithful cast out devils in the Name of Jesus. In the primitive ages of Christianity all Christians had power over the devil and even Tertullian does not hesitate to cry out to the Gentiles; "If you find a Christian who does not deliver a possessed man from the devil and put him to flight by the invocation of the Name of Jesus, let him be killed at once; **we consent to it**"

(3.) Diabolical injuries and evils are removed by the invocation of the holy Name of Jesus. Our divine Lord assures us of this in these words: "Behold, I give you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you."—*Luke* 10: 19. According to the interpretation of this passage by St. Ambrose and other Fathers of the Church, our Lord in these words conferred upon the faithful power over hell, so that in his Name they could remove all baneful influences of the devil. In the lives of the saints we frequently read that they delivered many from the power of the devil by the invocation of the Name of Jesus; and for this reason even to this day the Church in her exorcisms invokes tb? Tas»» of Jesus, in order to defeat the wiles and overcome the baneful influences of the devil.

(r.) The invocation of the Name of Jesus with confidence is also a most effectual means against the temptations of the devil. "If" says St. Justin, "we fight against the devil in the Name of Jesus, Jesus will fight for us, with us, and in us, and the enemy will flee as soon as he hears the Name of Jesus." "The power of Christ," says St. Athanasius, "is so great that the evil spirits fall powerless before him and cannot bear even the mention of his Name." The holy hermit Anthony on his death-bed before expiring gave this admonition to his disciples: "You are aware of i the various assaults of the spirits of hell, for you have been witnesses of their violent attacks. Breathe but the word Jesus, imprint this holy Name deeply on your heart by a firm and filial belief in its efficacy, and thus you will put all hell to flight.

2. *It affords us help in all natterai evils, as in sicknesses, bodily dangers, accidents and calamities.* Our divine Saviour says in the passage already partly quoted: "In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover."—*Mark* 16: 17, 18. We have evidence of the wonderful virtue of the Name Jesus in the epistle for this festival wherein it is recorded that Peter healed the lame man by the invocation of this Name. The Acts of the Apostles and Church history contain numerous miracles which were wrought in the Name of Jesus; sicknesses of all kinds were cured, evils of the most diverse nature were removed, and the dead raised to life. "We can," says Origen, "adduce a countless multitude of Greeks and barbarians who believe in our Jesus. Among them are some, who in token of the power received through faith, miraculously heal the sick, invoking over them the Name of Jesus. We ourselves saw many who were delivered in this way from great plagues, from madness, idiocy and numerous other evils."

3. *Finally it procures for us all benefits and graces desirable for time and eternity.* Our Blessed Lord himself assures us of this in the words: "Amen, amen, I say to you: If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it *yoAxf—fohn* 16: 23. Jesus doesnot limit the object of our prayer, he gives us an unlimited power to ask whatsoever we desire, and he confirms his promise with a solemn oath, "Amen, amen," that we shall obtain the purport of our request. Whatsoever we ask in his Name, we may be sure of obtaining. We must not, however, pray-for Anything detrimental to our salvation; that would not be praying in the Name of Jesus, and by so doing we should abuse our Saviour instead of making him our Mediator. We should not comply with the intention of our Lord's injunction to pray in his Name were we anxious only to procure temporal blessings, but cold and indifferent in the momentous affair of our salvation. We should ask for the things of this world with a certain degree of apprehension, lest they should prove the cause of our spiritual ruin. In this respect adhere firmly to the rule of Christ: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."—*Luke* 12: 31.

Example: A Mahometan fled from his home, in order to obtain in a Purtuguese fort the object of his wishes, for divine grace had infused into his heart a great desire for Christianity. High in the heavens the sun was aglow, and in the boundless desert of burning sand through which the fugitive had to pass no trace of water was to be found, so that after having suffered the most intense thirst for a long time he stretched himself in the sand to await death. There he remembered how he had often heard from the Christian slaves that the invocation of the Name of Jesus brought help even in the greatest dangers; he scarcely had pronounced this holy Name when he felt his tongue and palate refreshed, free from all dryness, and his strength restored so that with renewed courage he continued his journey. After a short time the same burning thirst, the same lassitude returned, when he again invoked the Name of Jesus and again found the same relief and succor as before, which enabled him to reach the Portuguese fort, whence he was sent to Lisbon and baptized. Now if this Mahometan by invoking the Name of Jesus with confidence arrived at the knowledge of the true Church, how much more shall we, who are already iu the bosom of the Catholic Church, arrive at the heavenly Jerusalem by the devout invocation of this holy Name!

PERORATION.

Venerate the holy Name of Jesus henceforth with renewed fervor, for, as you have heard, it is a holy and a saving Name.

Have recourse to this Name with confidence in every necessity and cry out with the Apostles: “Lord, save us, we perish.” If sinful thoughts and desires arise in your heart, if you are tempted to anger, revenge, impurity, blasphemy, despair, or to any sin whatever, call upon the Name of Jesus. In doubtful affairs, call upon Jesus, and you will find solace and help. If you stand in need of any grace, again call upon the Name of Jesus, and you will obtain that for which you ask. Let this Name be ever in your heart and on your lips. At work and at rest, at home and in the church, in solitude and in society, in sickness and in health, think of Jesus, and invoke his sweet Name. Let us pray to God for the grace that our last sigh on our death-bed may be: “ Jesus, Jesus. Amen.

FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE B. V. M.» OR CANDLEMAS DAY.

Lesson.—*Mai.* 3 : 1-4 : Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I send my angel, and he shall prepare the way before my face. And presently the Lord whom you seek, and the angel of the testament, whom you desire, shall come to his temple. Behold, he cometh, saith the Lord of hosts: and who shall be able to think of the day of his coming ? and who shall stand to see him ? for he is like a refining fire, and like the fuller's herb: and he shall sit refining and cleansing the silver : and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and shall refine them as gold, and as silver : and they shall offer sacrifices to the Lord in justice. And the sacrifice of Juda and of Jerusalem shall please the Lord, as the days of old, and the ancient years, saith the Lord Almighty.

Gospel.—*Luke 2:* 22-32. At that time: After the days of Mary's purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Jesus to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord : Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord : and to offer a sacrifice, according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon; and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel ; and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when his parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he also took him into his arms, and blessed God, and said: Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace: because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples ; a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

FIRST SKETCH.

MARY IN THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM, AN EXAMPLE TEACHING US HOW WE SHOULD CONDUCT OURSELVES IN CHURCH.

After the days of Mary's purification, according to the lain of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Jesus to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.—Luke 2 : 22.

The festival which we celebrate to-day has two names: The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Candlemas-day. It is called Candlemas-day because on this day wax tapers are solemnly blessed and carried lighted in a procession. This feast with its procession dates back to the earliest ages of the Church. Mention is made of it by Pope Gelasius I., in the year 494. St. Bernard, in a sermon on this festival, says: "This holy procession was first made by the Virgin Mother, St. Joseph, holy Simeon, and Anne, to be afterwards performed in commemoration thereof in all places, and by all nations, amid the exultation of the whole earth." Again he says: "They walk two by two, holding in their hands candles, lighted, not from ordinary fire, but from that which had been first blessed in the church by the priests, and singing the praises of the Lord, because great is his glory." The other name of the feast is the *Purification*. Mary, the Mother of God, on this day repaired to Jerusalem to fulfil the law of purification, to present the Child Jesus to the Lord and to pay the prescribed sum of money for his ransom. We shall attentively consider this event to-day ; and whilst we represent to our minds Mary in the temple at Jerusalem as a model for our behavior in church, we shall consider—

I. The purification to which she submitted;
II. The sacrifice which she offered io God, and
III. The ransom which she paid for the divine Child.

Part I.

I. According to the law of Moses *{Levit.* **12: 2,** *et seq.),* **a** woman, after childbirth, was to remain for a certain time in a state which that law considered unclean, during which time she was not to appear in public, nor presume to touch anything consecrated to God. This term was forty days after the birth of a son, and eighty after the birth of a daughter. At the expiration of the time the mother was required to bring to the door of the temple

a lamb of a year old, and a young pigeon or a turtle-dove. A young pigeon or a turtle-dove as a sin offering was required of all, whether rich or poor; but if the cost of a lamb were too great for persons in moderate circumstances, nothing more was required than two pigeons, or two-turtle doves, one for a burnt, the other for a sin-offering. These being sacrificed to Almighty God by the priest, the woman was cleansed from her impurity and reinstated in her former privileges. Mary, was under no obligation to fulfil this law, for she had conceived the divine Child not in a natural way but of the Holy Ghost, and had become a mother without ceasing to be the purest virgin. Hence the Church says to-day in her divine Office: "As virgin she conceived him (the Son of God), as virgin she brought him forth, and as virgin she adored him, after she had brought him forth." And St. Bernard says: In such a conception, such a birth, there was nothing unclean, nothing illicit, nothing needing purification. But although our Saviour was conceived of the Holy Ghost, although his Blessed Mother remained always a spotless virgin and was, therefore, under no obligation to the law, she was, however, under the letter of the law in the eyes of the world, which as yet knew nothing of her miraculous conception. Her humility rendering her perfectly resigned, she submitted to every humiliating circumstance which the law required. She places herself among ordinary mothers, being desirous to conceal her privilege and dignity.

2. Our case is quite different when we appear in church; we are not pure and spotless as the Blessed Virgin, but sinners, some of us burdened even with grievous, others with venial sins. But the church is the place where we are freed from our sins. The Church," says St. Chrysostom, "is that admirable institution for the healing of the sick, not for the maladies of the body, but for those of the soul." Though your soul be covered with the leprosy of sin you have a remedy which will infallibly free you from this loathsome disease. This remedy is, as you all know, the Holy Sacrament of Penance. If you sincerely confess your sins, they will all be remitted to you, together with the eternal punishment, no matter how grievous and numerous they may be, and you will again become children of God and heirs of heaven. If you hear mass devoutly and with a contrite heart, or worthily receive holy communion, not mortal, but venial sins are thereby remitted. Even holy water has the virtue of freeing you from venial sins, if you sprinkle yourself with it in church in a spirit of penance. Oh, what a place of grace is the church! Where is the Catholic who should not love to visit the church! And yet there are many who prefer to be anywhere rather than at church. Many would have time to hear mass daily, and to adore Jesus in the taber-

nacle, but they pass their time in idleness, in foolish conversation and frivolous amusements. They even neglect to hear mass on Sundays and holidays, they idly waste their time at home whilst mass is going on, take a walk, or even visit saloons. Others go to church, but how do they behave? Instead of praying devoutly, they yield to distractions, laugh, talk or sleep; instead of repenting of their sins and making good resolutions, they indulge in sinful looks and nourish all kinds of wicked thoughts and desires in their hearts; instead of humbling themselves before the infinite majesty of God, they are full of ambition and a desire to please. Woe to such Catholics; the church, this place of blessing and grace, becomes to them a curse and the cause of their perdition. There are various reasons why God punished the apostate angels without mercy, and immediately after their first sin condemned them for ever. But St. Bernard expresses himself on this point in such away that everyone who misbehaves in church ought to be terrified. He says that God at once and without mercy plunged the fallen angels into eternal damnation because they sinned in a place where everything breathed holiness, and at a time when all good angels adored God with the most profound veneration. To sin in a place so holy as the church is a crime which deserves no mercy or pardon.

Consider this and appear in church animated with the spirit of holy joy, with deep veneration and compunction. Examples: The hermits in the wilderness of Thebais made long and laborious journeys to church, and when in the sacred edifice they behaved like angels in human form. They observed the strictest silence, even endeavored to suppress coughing; they were continually on their knees and prayed with a devotion which edified all who were present. The mother of the two renowned doctors of the Church, St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Basil, was so full of respect whilst at church, that she never turned her back to the altar. St. Homobonus went regularly to church at midnight to assist at the night office of the monks, and remained praying before a crucifix till after the conventual mass. He prayed with such devotion and interior recollection that all who saw him were moved and urged to devotion. God glorified him with the gift of miracles. Call these and similar examples to mind as often as you go to church, that you may always conduct yourselves as good Catholics and thus obtain God's grace and blessing.

Part II.

1. The Virgin Mother of God also *offered a sacrifice in the temple at Jerusalem*. While by the command of God an angel killed all the first-born males of the Egyptians in one night, he passed

by the houses of the Israelites, doing them no harm. For a perpetual remembrance of this divine mercy the Israelites were obliged by the law of Moses (*Ex.* 13: 12) to bring their first-born sons into the temple and consecrate them to God. Mary was not subject to this law, for she had brought forth no purely human child, but the Son of God made man. Nevertheless, she brings her divine Infant with the greatest readiness into the temple and presents him to the Lord. This presentation is for Mary the greatest sacrifice she can make. She knows that Jesus will one day die on the cross and shed the last drop of his blood for us, and to this sacrifice she consents even on this day; she yields all right to her Child, consecrates him entirely to God, the heavenly Father, and consents to his passion and death for the redemption of man. Since Mary loved her divine Child infinitely more than an earthly mother has ever loved her only child, and since to save this child she would have yielded up her own life a thousand times with the greatest joy, if it had been possible without violating the will of God, it is evident what a great sacrifice she made to-day.

2. According to this most beautiful example of the Blessed Virgin you must also make sacrifices as often as you appear in church. In what do these sacrifices consist? *In renouncing all that is contrary to the will of God and doing what he requires of you.* You are ambitious, craving the praise of the world; every real or even imaginary neglect offends you. Make the resolution in all your thoughts and actions to seek only God's honor and to bear humiliations with patience—this is a sacrifice which God requires of you. Your heart is attached to money and the goods of this world, your thoughts are intent upon earthly things, and you neglect the affair of your salvation. Resolve to renounce this inordinate love for the perishable goods of earth and to be more solicitous for your salvation—God requires this sacrifice of you. Your conscience tells you that you possess another's goods, and that you have injured him unjustly. Resolve to make restitution, and to repair the damage—God demands this sacrifice. You indulge in sinful intercourse with a person of the opposite sex, or you live in a house which is for you a proximate occasion of sin. Say to yourself: I will give up this company from this very hour, I will leave this house—God requires this sacrifice. You live in enmity with one of your neighbors, and it is difficult for you to reconcile yourself with him. Give up this enmity at once—God demands this sacrifice. You have a bad habit, *e. g.,* of cursing and blaspheming, using immodest words, speaking ill of others, getting drunk. Promise God faithfully to give up these sinful habits, cost what it may—God demands this sacrifice. Heretofore you have been negligent in prayer, in going to church,

in hearing the word of God, in receiving the sacraments. Promise God earnestly to correct thess neligences and to become zealous in virtue— God demands this sacrifice. These and similar sacrifices are, it is true, difficult and demand self-denial; but consider that Mary by consecrating her divine Child to the Lord, on this day made a far greater sacrifice. Do not forget the words of Christ: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence ; and the violent bear it away."—*Matt. 11:* 12. The saints were all convinced of this truth, and for that reason they were intent upon nothing so much as mortifying themselves interiorly and exteriorly. St. Elizabeth, duchess of Thuringia, led a very mortified life. She rooted out all inclinations which prevented her from giving herself wholly to God, so that she could truly say: "Thou art all mine, and I am all thine." She told her chief maid that she unceasingly prayed to God for three gifts:

(a.) To despise all earthly goods;

(Æ.) To bear patiently contumely and contempt.

(r.) To moderate her love for her own children.

After many prayers and mortifications, she really obtained these three gifts. Her confessor, Conrad of Marburg, who wished her to become a perfect saint, subjected her to severe trials. Having observed that her attachment to her two favorite maids, Isentrude and Guta, seemed too strong, and an impediment to her spiritual progress, he proposed to her to dismiss them ; and, without making any reply, she instantly obeyed, though the sacrifice cost mutual tears. She died a great saint in the twenty-fourth year of her age, on the 19th of November, 1231. Thus you see what acts of interior and exterior mortification Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, and all the saints have made for God. They followed their divine Saviour on the way of the cross, and have, therefore, been glorified with him in heaven. Let us also make similar sacrifices for God.

Part III.

I. Mary makes an *offering of money in the temple.* As already mentioned, the law of Moses required that all the first-born males should be consecrated to God. Those belonging to the tribe of Levi had to be given entirely to the Lord. They were educated for the priesthood and instructed in everything pertaining to the Lord. Having arrived at the proper age they were obliged **to assist the priests in the celebration of the sacrifices and in all**

other functions belonging to the service of God. Those first-born males who were not of the tribe of Levi were to be presented to God, it is true, but they could be ransomed. The sum required seems to have been five shekels, each shekel thirty-seven cents of our money, so that five amounted to about two dollars. The Blessed Mother of God also fulfilled this requirement of the law, she presented her divine Child and paid the prescribed five shekels. She was under no obligation to do this, for the law applied only to the sons of men, but she made this pecuniary sacrifice—though in her poverty it must have been very hard—first, because she wished to do for the love of God that which she was not obliged to do, and, secondly, because she knew that the ransom would be used for good purposes.

2. Here you have in Mary a beautiful example, shewing that you too must make pecuniary sacrifices as far as you can when the interest of the Church demands them.

(a.) In the early ages of the Church the faithful offered bread and wine, milk, flour, grapes and oil. First came the men, then the women, in white clothes, with their offerings. The privilege of making offerings or presents to the Church was granted only to those who lived in full communion with her. Catechumens, penitents, unbelievers, heretics, and such as followed a dishonest trade, or led a scandalous life, were excluded from making offerings. In the course of time the faithful offered, not only the fruits of the earth, but also money. These offerings belonged to the priests, and were used by them for their own support, for the poor, and for other charitable objects.

(Æ.) In the primitive ages of the Church the offerings of the faithful were also received in another way. A deacon went around among the faithful who were present in church and collected their offerings. This custom still exists to-day, for on all Sundays and holidays one or more collectors go around among the assembled congregation and receive their offerings. These offerings are used for the church and for the poor. That the faithful may be able to manifest their charitable disposition at every visit to the church, there are poor-boxes in all churches for the reception of offerings.

(r.) Finally, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the epistles of St. Paul, extra collections were customary among the early Christians. These collections were made on Sundays (Z *Cor.* 16), and proved so large and abundant that not only the poor of the congregation but also those of other congregations could be assisted. In fact many Christians sold all they had and

paid the price of it into the common treasury for the support of the poor and needy.—*Acts* 4: 34. Hence you need not be astonished that in our days collections are made in our churches for various objects, and especially in this country where everything depends on voluntary contributions and where there are no endowments. Be not displeased at the frequent appeals to your generosity, but give according to your ability. It is God who gives you all you possess and it is he who calls upon you to pay some interest on what he has entrusted to your charge. What you give to the poor you lend to the Lord, and the Lord is a liberal rewarder.

PERORATION

I have now briefly explained to you how you must imitate the Blessed Virgin in your visits to the church. Always go to church with the intention of being freed from your faults and sins, and for this purpose employ the means which are at your disposal for the remission of sins. Never appear in church without making a sacrifice to God. Offer him your heart and promise him to renounce all that is displeasing to him, and to do all that he requires of you. Be charitable in church, pay your seat-rent regularly, and when a collection is made for any charitable purpose show your generosity. In such a way the church will be to you a place of grace. Mary will take you under her particular protection, and Jesus Christ, your Redeemer and Judge, will hereafter reward you with the eternal goods of heaven.

SECOND SKETCH.

THE OFFERINGS WHICH WE MUST MAKE TO GOD.

They carried Jesus to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord,—Luke 2:22.

By the command of God an angel slew all the first-born males of the Egyptians, while he spared those of the Israelites. For a perpetual remembrance of this mercy and grace the Israelites were obliged to offer all their first-born males to the Lord. Mary also makes this offering to-day; she was under no obligation to do so, for she had conceived of the Holy Ghost, and had become

a Mother without ceasing to be a spotless Virgin. Neither is Jesus Christ, her Son, a purely human child, but the Incarnate Son of God, and as such not subject to a law given only for the children of men. But to humble herself in the eyes of the world, and to gratify her zeal in all that pleases God, after having fulfilled the law of purification, she repairs with her child into the temple, to present him to the Lord. By offering to the Lord her only-begotten Son, Mary made the most precious sacrifice. We also should offer to God the best that we possess, namely:

Z *The first years of our life;*
II. *The first hours of each day, and*
III. *The beginning of all our works.*

Part I.

We must offer to God *the first years of our life,* that is, we must serve God from our infancy. Why?

\. *Because we are strictly obliged to do so.* God is our Lord, therefore it is our duty to serve him. This service embraces our whole life, beginning the moment we learn to know God, and continuing uninterruptedly till our latest breath. If we live to be a hundred years old, and neglect to serve God even for a day, nay, even an hour, we do not perform our duty, and we deserve punishment. Hence it is the strict duty of parents to begin at an early age the Christian education of their children, to enable them to offer to God the first years of their life. "Hast thou children? Instruct them, and bow down their neck from their childhood."—*Ecclus.* 7 : 25. Parents have a beautiful example in the mother of the blessed John Gerson, the renowned divine and chancellor of France. When little John wished something to eat, she would say to him : "My child, we have nothing in the world, we must ask God for everything we need, since everything comes from him. Kneel down, lift your little hands and pray to your heavenly Father to give you something to eat." Then when John knelt and raised his hands in prayer, his mother approached him noiselessly, and let apples, pears, nuts, and bread drop before him as if they just fell from heaven. And when the boy jumped up with joy and showed his mother what he had received, she said: "Behold, my child, how our heaveniy Father loves good, pious children, and gives them everything, if they only pray devoutly." An excellent way, indeed, to instil religion into the minds of children and to induce them to offer to God the first years of their life.

2. *Because the first years of life are most pleasing to God.* **The** first fruits of the earth, *e. g.,* the first cherries, strawberries, tomatoes, potatoes, etc., sell at a higher price than those which come later into the market. Thus it is far more pleasing to God when one serves him zealously in the years of one's infancy and childhood, than when one enters into his service in old age. Gold is more precious than silver, and silver more precious than lead. He who serves God in his infancy and youth offers him gold, he who serves him only in mature age offers him silver, and he who enters his service in old age offers him lead. The reason is because man in youth is by nature frivolous and prone to evil, and must therefore combat much and overcome severe temptations if he wishes to serve God, whilst in mature, and still more in old, age, man acts more circumspectly and considerately, reflects more upon eternity, and, as a rule, does not experience so many difficulties in the service of God. We read of St. Aloysius, St. Stanislaus Kostka, and of other saints who served God in their childhood and youth with the greatest fervor, that they received extraordinary graces here, and in heaven a reward, such as even the martyrs do not enjoy. What an encouragement for you, young people, to dedicate the most beautiful years of your life to God, and what an impulse for you, Christian parents, to devote all possible care to the education of your children, and to preserve them in innocence.

3. *Because, upon the offering of the first years of life to God, generally the whole life, in fact, all eternity defends.* As a person is in his youth, so he is generally all his life. Tobias, Samuel, John the Baptist, and numerous other saints, served God from a tender age and lived in innocence; the result was, that they devoted also the remainder of their lives to God, and became saints. Cain, Cham, Absalom, and countless others, were guilty of many sins in their youth, and the result was that they afterwards led a sinful life and perished. It is therefore great folly to say: Young people must sow their wild oats, after awhile they will return to the right path and amend their life. No; as in youth so in after-life. There may be exceptions, but they are few and far between. The reason is obvious. The sins of childhood and youth cast their roots deeper and deeper, and become passions and habits which without a special grace can never be eradicated. Hence St. Jerome says: "It is difficult to eradicate what has already become a habit in youth. A new vessel long retains the odor with which it was at first impregnated." This saint relates that Alexander the Great never gave up the faults to which as a boy he was subject. If, therefore, sons and daughters, you have the best of intentions in regard to your hereafter, you must offer to God the first years of your life; and you, parents, see that you mak>

your children abandon the faults and imperfections to which they are subject, that they may not result in passions which are seldom or never amended in after life.

Part II.

IVe must also offer to God the first hours of each day.

1. *The veneration which we owe to God demands this.* When a person visits a king or great personage it would certainly be a breach of etiquette to salute the servants first. Hence it is a great deal more improper if in the morning, as soon as you rise, you give your attention to worldly affairs instead of to God and to his holy service. God is our Lord, to him we must first show honor and respect every day, and only after the fulfilment of this duty should we occupy ourselves with our temporal affairs. St. Ambrose says: "Do you know, O man, that you owe to God the first fruit of your heart and voice." We read in the Sacred Scripture that all pious Jews offered to God the beginning of each day by pious aspirations and devout prayers. Thus David says of himself: "For to thee will I pray, O Lord, in the morning thou shalt hear my voice."—*Ps.* 5: 4. "He will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him; and he will pray in the sight of the Most High."—*Ecclus.* 39: 6. Your first thoughts in the morning must be of God; him you must adore.

2. *Gratitude also demands it.* When we awake in the morning refreshed and in good health, able to attend to our work, to whom do we owe this? To whom but to God, who has given us a sound, refreshing sleep. How many lie down in the evening, become ill during the night, and in the morning are unable to rise, or are found dead in bed? How many spend the nlgnt in pain and misery, longing for the break of day, for in their sufferings the night seems an eternity to them. How frequently calamities and accidents occur at night, burglaries, robbery, murder, conflagrations, etc., whereby many lose not only all their worldly substance, but even health and life? Who can number the sins which are committed in the night-time? How many may be burning in hell for sins committed in the darkness of night? Now, when God has graciously protected your body and soul during the night, is it not reasonable and just for you to offer to him the first hours of the day, and to thank him with a grateful heart for his protection?

3. *The dangers of body and soul, to which we are exposed during the coming day.* We are not secure against death any day. "Be-

hold, now, you who say: To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city; and there we will spend a year, and will traffic and make our gain: whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is life? It is a vapor which appeareth a little while and afterwards shall vanish away."—*James* 4: 13-15. How often is verified what St. Ephrem says: "Many have made a number of appointments, and on the following day failed to appear, because they were suddenly snatched away, like sparrows by a hawk or lambs by a wolf. Some retired to rest in the evening in good health, and in the morning were no more; some sat down to table apparently well, and rose no more; some died suddenly while taking a walk or while playing; others died in the bath, others were celebrating their marriage and died suddenly in the bridal chamber, their bridal garment becoming their shroud." Yes, *birth, bridal day* and *burial* follow one another in quick succession. Examples of a sudden and unexpected death: Abel; the people at the time of the deluge; the wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha; Absalom; Ophni and Phinees, Heli's wicked sons. Examples from experience. What happened to others may happen to any one of us; we may die suddenly and unexpectedly. But what is a great deal worse, since every day brings with it various temptations and evil occasions, we may grievously offend God, lose his grace, and perhaps lay the foundation of our eternal damnation. Who, then, would neglect in the morning to recommend himself to the protection of God, and to ask him to avert whatever might prove injurious to body or soul? Offer, then, the first hours of each day to God and say your morning prayers devoutly.

Part III.

Finally, we must offer io God the beginning of all our works.

1. We offer them to him if he be the first and principal motive of all our actions. God can do nothing but what is worthy of himself. Being the highest and most perfect being, he could, in the creation of the world, and especially in the creation of man, have no other object in view than himself, his own honor and glory. Hence he says: "I have created him for my glory."—*Is.* 43: 7. From this it follows that we must refer all that we do to him, we must do it to please him and to manifest our veneration, our obedience, gratitude and love. Hence the admonition of the Apostle: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God."—*I. Cor.* 10: 31. All faithful servants of God had this end of our creation always before their eyes; whatever they undertook, whether it was of im

portance or not, they did all for the honor of God. Thus the maxim of St. Benedict was: *Ut in omnibus glorificetur Deus,* "that in all things God may be glorified." St. Ignatius, the Founder of the Society of Jesus, adopted the same maxim: *Ad majorem Dei gloriam,* "for the greater glory of God." St. Vincent of Paul at the beginning of all his actions used these words: "My God, I will now do this because I believe it to be pleasing to thee." St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi continually exhorted her nuns to offer to God all their actions, even the most insignificant. From time to time she would ask them: "With what intention do you do this?" If they answered, "from a natural motive", she said to them: "Do you not see that if you act in this manner you lose the merit of your action? By such works God is neither honored nor pleased."

2. On the intention which one has in his works depends their value. If one practices virtues and good works, yet has not God in view, but only one's self and temporal objects, one cannot expect the least reward in eternity. Witness the Pharisees, of whom, although they did much good, Christ said: "Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward."—*Matt.* 6: 2. In all their exercises of virtue and good works they labored only for temporal things; these they received as their reward; therefore they had no further claim to a reward in heaven. Many of the hermits in the deserts supported themselves by making baskets. Each of them usually made one basket a day. One day, however, a young hermit who labored all the time with the greatest assiduity finished two baskets and placed them before the door of his cell. When St Pachomius, his superior, passed by and noticed the baskets, he also perceived the bad intention of the young hermit. In the evening he said to the assembled brothers: "Behold, this brother from early morn till late in the evening has done less than nothing;for as he was seeking only his own praise he has worked in the service of the devil, and offered up to him all his sweat." In the same sense St. Jerome says: "If we should suffer martyrdom, in order to be praised and admired by men, we should have shed our blood in vain." On the other hand, the least thing done for the love of God is of value for eternity and will be rewarded in heaven. Thus our Lord himself assures us: 'Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."—*Matt,* io : 42. The good intention is in the spiritual life the secret of changing all into gold and of rendering the most insignificant things precious in the eyes of God. Hence St, Anselm says: "All, even the most indifferent and contemptible actions, become as it were golden, if they are done for the love of God." This good intention is the wonderful mystery

by which we arrive at extraordinary sanctity and by which we lay up a store of merits without having done anything great or extraordinary. It is the surest means of enclosing the longest life in a few years and of obtaining in a short time a high degree of perfection, so that to a person who does all for the love of God, can be applied the words of the Sacred Scripture: "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time."—*Il 'isd.* 4: 13. See to it, then, that you offer to God the beginning of ail your works, and for this end make a good intention every morning. There are three enemies to a good intention against which you must especially guard :

First, self-interest and a worldly spirit, lest you do your works exclusively on account of temporal prosperity or gain, and have not God, his honor, and the fulfilment of his will as your principal object; secondly, ambition and the desire to please; you must do nothing for the sake of pleasing man and obtaining the praise of the world ; and thirdly, impatience; you must not permit yourself to be carried away by anger when you meet with difficulties and impediments, but you must endure all hardships fox the love of God.

PERORATION.

These are the three offerings which you must make to God: the first years of your life, the first hours of each day, and the beginning of each work. Since many of you, on account of advanced age, can no longer offer to God the first years of your life, offer him at least the remainder of it, serve him from henceforth all the more faithfully in order to redeem lost time and to make amends for your negligence. Offer to him the first hours of each day, occupy yourselves in the morning with pious, salutary thoughts and good resolutionsand say your morning prayers devoutly. Offer to him the beginning of each work. Have God before your eyes in all your undertakings, and do all for the greater honor and glory of God. He will be please », with these offerings ; he will, if you present them with a heart full of love, receive them with favor, and reward you with the eternal felicity of heaven. Amen.

THIRD SKETCH.

THE NAMES OF THIS FESTIVAL.

After the days of Mary's purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Jesus to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.—Luke 2: 22.

This festival, which forms the conclusion of the Christmas cycle and the beginning of the Easter cycle, places before us for our consideration the important truth that Jesus Christ at his entrance into the world offered himself for us sinful men to his heavenly Father, and accomplished this sacrifice thirty-three years afterwards on Calvary. It reminds us of the duty of offering ourselves to God, that through the offering of Christ we may merit grace and salvation. This feast was observed in the East about the middle of the fifth century. In the year 541 the Emperor Justinian, on the occasion of a contagious plague and other calamities, commanded it to be celebrated throughout the empire, that the Redeemer, who went to meet Simeon in the temple, might also meet the afflicted and come to their assistance. Pope Gelasius, in the year 494, made this feast a holiday of obligation in the Roman Church. It has two names: The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Candlemas Day. These names will be the subject of our present meditation.

I. Why is this day called the feast of the Purification?
IL Why is it called Candlemas day?

Part L

This feast is called the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, because Mary, the Blessed Mother of God, on this day fulfilled the law of purification.

I. *In what did this law consisti* It required, as we read in Leviticus (chap. 12), every Jewish mother, who after the birth of a child was considered unclean, to submit to the rite of purification at the expiration of a certain time. She was unclean seven days after the birth of a boy and fourteen days after the birth of a girl, and was not allowed during that time to appear before any one, not even before her husband. She was obliged to remain at home thirty-three days more after the birth of a boy and sixty-six days after the birth of a girl, and was not permitted to appear with

the rest of the people in the Sanctuary of the Lord, in the synagogues or in the temple. Forty days after the birth of a boy, and eighty days after the birth of a girl she was obliged by the law to appear at the outer court of the temple and to be purified by the prayer of the priest. For mothers in good circumstances a lamb and a turtle dove, and for the poor two turtle doves, were prescribed as offerings. The reason of the rite of purification was based upon the belief that from the time of the sin in Paradise a curse was pronounced upon the woman and the fruit of her womb, and that in consequence of this curse every birth caused a corporal contamination, which could be removed only by the prayer of the priest and by sacrifice.

2. *Was Mary obliged tofulfil this law?* By no means; this precept was only for ordinary mothers, not for Mary, the divine Mother. By becoming a mother she had not contaminated her virginal purity in the least; on the contrary, she had elevated it, for she received the blessed fruit of her womb not in a natural manner, but of the Holy Ghost. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."—*Luke* 1:35. Hence St. Bernard says: "It is evident that the mother of the Lord was by no means included in the law of purification, for she conceived her son without knowing man, as the prophet Jeremias had foretold: 'The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth; *a woman shall compass a man.*'—*Jer.* 31: 22. Without knowing man, contrary to the natural laws, pure and undefiled, she will surround the Saviour with her body, and when she shall bring forth, her virginity shall not be defiled." Mary was not obliged to comply with this law of purification; according to the same doctor of the Church, she could have said: "I need no purification. Why should I not enter into the sanctuary when my body, which knows not man, has become the temple of the Holy Ghost? Why should I not go into the temple, since I have brought forth the Lord of the temple? In having conceived and given birth I did not become unclean; therefore I need not purification, for my Son is the source of purity, and is come to free mankind from the uncleannes of sin. And how can the observance of the law conduce to my purification, when in giving birth to my Son I became the purest?"

3. *Why did Maryfulfil the law ofpurification?*

(al) In order not to give scandal to any one. The mystery of her having conceived of the Holy Ghost was, with the exception of Joseph, unknown to all; she was looked upon as an ordinary

mother. Now if she had not submitted to the law of purification many would have been scandalized and would have judged her wrongly. Others might have lost the reverence due to the Mosaic law, when they saw that Mary, otherwise so good and pious, did not observe it. To prevent such a scandal Mary wished to be considered nothing more than an ordinary mother, and like them she did what the law prescribed. Let Mary be your model, and be careful not to give scandal to others. Avoid not only sin, but also the appearance of sin, be prudent and circumspect in your words and actions, be careful as to your surroundings, and do and say nothing that might make a bad impression upon others or be to them an occasion of sin. Act according to the principle of St. Paul, who says of himself: "If meat scandalize my brother (that is, if my eating it cause my brother to sin), I will never eat flesh, lest I should scandalize my brother."—*I. Cor.* 8: 13.

(3.) *In order to humble herself.* It is not contrary to humility tG be willing to appear to be what one really is. If Mary had made herself known and had said: "I am not obliged like ordinary mothers to fulfil the law of purification, for I have conceived my child of the Holy Ghost and have become a mother without ceasing to be a spotless virgin," she would not have sinned against humility. That she conceals the grace imparted to her and does not make herself known is owing to her humility. But she goes still further in this virtue; she conceals not only her dignity but wishes to appear far less than she is in reality. For what does she wish to appear, and really does appear by fulfilling the law of purification? Evidently as an ordinary woman, as a mother who has conceived and brought forth according to the law of nature. Is not this a profound humiliation on the part of this most pure virgin? And what shall we think of Mary when we consider the wonderful dignity of her divine Maternity? Do you not call it most profound humility when Mary, the Mother of God, the Queen of angels and saints, places herself in the same category with ordinary women? Oh, that you would imitate the Blessed Mother of God in this virtue of humility which is so necessary and salutary. Oh, that you would ponder well the words of St. Gregory the Great: "If you perform godly works, but do not possess the virtue of humility, they are as nothing. If you pray, fast, give alms, live chastely, practice every virtue, all is in vain, if it be done without humility. Therefore, be humble; do not take pride in natural or supernatural gifts and prerogatives, for whatever you possess is an unmerited gift of God. Do not exalt yourselves above others. Do not think yourselves better than others." We read in the Following of Christ: "It will do thee no harm to esteem thyself the worst of all; but it

will hurt thee very much to prefer thyself before any one."—*Book* I, *ch.* 7. Do not seek the praise and applause of the world, for as long as you desire to please man you cannot be servants of Christ. Think little of yourselves, bear humiliations patiently, and in all things seek the honor and glory of God. The more humble you are, the more secure is your salvation, for a truly humble person cannot be lost.

(r.) *In order to manifest her zeal in the service of God.* Mary loved God above all; therefore, she did not question whether the good she could effect was commanded or not; she did good whenever she had an opportunity. Knowing that the fulfilment of the Mosaic law was pleasing to God, she went to Jerusalem with the greatest joy to comply with the precept of purification and to make the prescribed offering. Herein also you should take Mary for your pattern and not content yourself with observing simply the law, but be willing to do all that is good and pleasing to God. Does not God bestow countless blessings and favors upon you without being in the least bound to do so, and has not Jesus Christ died for you on the cross? Should you be willing to do only what is strictly required of you and nothing more? Would not this be acting ungratefully towards God? And if you consider that heretofore you have frequently and grievously offended God, should you not endeavor to repair your negligences and sins by redoubling your zeal, and on that account do as much good as you can, no matter whether it is commanded or not? In order to strengthen and enliven your zeal in virtue frequently consider the words of the Apostle: "He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly: and he who soweth in blessings, shall also reap blessings."—*II. Cor.* 9; 6.

Part II.

Another name for this festival very commonly used is Candlemas Day. It derived this name from the solemn blessing of candles which were afterwards carried in procession on this day.

i. *Whence originates the custom of blessing candles and carrying them in procession?* According to the universal belief, it dates back to the time of St. Gelasius who governed the Church towards the close of the fifth century. During the time that paganism prevailed in Rome several feasts were celebrated in the month of February in honor of the gods, at which the most horrible debaucheries were indulged in. Thus, on the fifth day of the month the so-called *Lupercalia* in honor of the god Pan

took place. The priest sprinkled the city with purification water in the morning, after which they killed and offered white goats in sacrifice to the gods. Then they covered themselves with the skins of these slaughtered animals and in this hideous garb ran around the city, striking the women they met with whips in order to make them fruitful and to facilitate their delivery. In the same month the *Ambarvalia* were celebrated. These consisted of solem marches, at which the Romans carried torches to express joy over the victories by which they had subjected all nations to their sway. These and other pagan feasts were condemned, not only on account of the gross superstition which was their foundation, but chiefly on account of the dabaucheries and vices connected therewith. The people ran about disguised, uttering savage yells, carrying lighted torches in their hands, abusing everyone that came in their way, robbing and often killing them ; they drank till they became crazy and wallowed like hogs in the mire, they sang the most obscene songs, and practiced every kind of vice. These abominations were not looked upon as sinful or wrong; the people believed, on the contrary, that the wilder and more dissipated they were, the more pleasing and acceptable they would be to their gods. When Christianity had obtained a footing in Rome, the Church endeavored to suppress these pagan feasts, or to change them into Christian ones. St. G-elasius introduced the feast of Candlemas and ordained that on this day a solemn procession should be made with candles previously blessed. This solemnity was to withdraw the Christians from the superstitions and vices of the pagans and turn their eyes to Christ, who as the light of the world has dispelled the darkness of paganism and desires us to adore God in spirit and in truth.

2. *What do the blessed candles carried in the procession symbolize r* They symbolize Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, the light of the world.

(a.) The wax of which the candles are made should be of the purest. The bees, too, which prepare the wax, are very clean insects ; they tolerate nothing unclean either in themselves or their hives. Thus the pure wax from which the candles are made represents to us the *pure humanity* of Jesus Christ; the cleanly bees, which prepare the wax, symbolize Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, in whose pure womb the humanity of Christ has been prepared by the holy Ghost.

(£.) The bright, clear light which ascends from the candle signifies the *Divinity* of Christ. Light is frequently used in Sacred Scripture as an emblem of the Godhead. Thus St. John writes: ·‹God is light, and in him there is no darkness."—Z *John i* : 5.

Jesus Christ also calls himself the light in as far as he is the bearer of light, Teacher, Revealer and Sanctifier. Thus he says: "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life."—*John* 8:12. "*I* am come a light into the world; that whosoever believeth in me may not remain in darkness."—*John* 12 ; 46.

(é.) The lighted candles remind us particularly of the words of holy Simeon in the gospel of this day : "Because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face **of** all peoples : *a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy -people Israeli'—Luke* 2: 39 32. Jesus Christ is really the light which dispels the darkness of paganism and the errors of the Jews; the light which has brought men to the knowledge and worship of God. He has taught us what we must believe, hope and do in order to become holy and save our souls. He has also given us a most beautiful example in the service of God and in all virtues, as he himself says: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also."—*John.* 13: 15. And again: "If any man minister to me, let him follow me, and where I am, there also shall my minister be."—*John 12:* 26. Jesus Christ is the light of the world for all ages: for through the Holy Catholic Church he announces his doctrine to men to the end of time and shows them not only the way to salvation, but also administers to them the means of grace necessary to attain their last end.

3. *What do the lighted tapers teach ust* They teach us—

(a.) *That as Christians we must never lose sight of the words of the Apostle :* "Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth.—*Col.* 3: 2. You may turn a lighted taper or hold it whatever way you please, upward, downward, sideways, the flame will always ascend, and its direction cannot be changed. From this you should learn that all your thoughts and desires should be directed not to earthly but to heavenly things. We are pilgrims here below ; our home is not this earth,' but heaven. "We have not here a lasting city, but seek one that is to come."—*Heb.* 13: 14. The traveler on his homeward route tarries not, he stops only long enough to refresh himself; his thoughts revert to his home which he strives to reach as soon as possible. Our conduct should be similar to that of the traveller; we must not love the world and its allurements; we must use the goods of this earth and value them in so far as they are necessary and useful for our temporary support, and aid us in attaining our final destiny ; our principal desire must be to reach heaven. Let us while passing through that which is temporal not forget that which is eternal.

(3.) *That we should consider seriously how our days become less on earth until, finally, life is altogether extinct.* If you light a candle it decreases little by little and consumes itself. Thus it is with life. The very moment we are born we begin to die, and we only cease to die when we cease to live; from the very beginning life is at war with death. "It is a great error to suppose that man begins only to die when the cold sweat of death breaks out on the body, when the eyes grow dim, the cheeks become sunken, the face grows pale, the pulse stops and the soul is about to depart from the body; we die daily; daily a part of our life is cut off. The last hour in which we cease to live does not bring death, but only completes it."—*Seneca.* We are reminded of this truth by the candle, which begins to consume itself the moment it is lighted; it tells us: "Watch, for death is already in the way; as I consume myself ?nd do not know how long I shall burn, so your life grows less every day, and you know not when it will be extinguished."

(i.) *That we should shine before men with a good example.* As the lighted wax candles spread light around, so we, as children of light, must in all things show ourselves an example of good works.—*Titus* 2: 7. Actions speak louder than words; nothing exercises a greater influence than a good example; it corrects the sinner, strengthens the weak and preserves the good in the way of virtue. What was it that caused St. Augustine, in whom the interior motions of grace remained so long ineffectual, to be eventually so thoroughly converted? It was in particular good example. His friend Simplician related to him with what courage the orator Victorinus, who was also a sinner, at once broke the fetters of his passions and obtained the liberty of the children of God. This example made such an impression upon him, that from that very hour he renounced his worldly, sinful life and began to leadthe life of a saint. Let your light also shine; comport yourselves in your discourses and actions in such a manner as to edify your neighbor and carefully shun everything that might prove a stumbling-block to him. Certainly, if all, especially fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses, give a good example, a change for the better will soon be discernible in our midst; sins and vices will disappear and faith and virtue will flourish. This will please God and all good people.

PERORATION.

Do what the wax candles teach you. Frequently raise your eyes toward heaven, and consider that all earthly goods and joys, which the children of the world in their blind and perverse

sense esteem so highly, are vain and fleeting, and will profit you nothing in the hour of death. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all other things shall be added unto you as far as is necessary. Consider that this life is only a lingering death and be solicitous for a happy end. Be not content with living piously yourselves, but endeavor also by a good example to edify your fellow-men and to encourage them to virtue. Observe these lessons which the lighted tapers teach you, that you may be children of light, and may be admitted after this life into the heavenly Jerusalem where perpetual light will shine upon you. Amen.

FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH.

Lesson.—*Ecclus.* 45: 1-6. He was beloved of God and men; whose memory is in benediction. He made him like the saints in glory, and magnified him in the fear of his enemies: and with his words he appeased monsters. He glorified him in the sight of kings and gave him commandments in the sight of his people, and showed him his glory. He sanctified him in his faith and meekness, and chose him out of all flesh. For he heard him, and his voice, and brought him into a cloud. And he gave him commandments before his face, and a law of life and instruction.

Gospel.—*Matt.* 1: 18-21. When Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold, the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.

FIRST SKETCH.

THE JUSTICE OF ST. JOSEPH.

Joseph being a just man.—Matt, 1: 19.

St. Joseph, whose festival we celebrate to-day, is a model of sanctity, more known to God than to man. His life apparently was an ordinary one, a life similar to that of most men. It is certain, however, that he was a saint who among the elect of heaven occupies one of the first places. His dignity makes us infer his great sanctity; for who could believe that God would have

chosen him for the foster-father of his Son if he had not been eminent for his sanctity? "In order to conceive an idea of the sanctity of St. Joseph, it is enough to know that God has chosen him to occupy his place in regard to Jesus Christ."—*St. Alphonsus.* But the gospel also vouches for his sanctity, for it calls him a *just* man. The expression "just" in the Sacred Scripture signifies a perfectly good man, adorned with all virtues. Hence St. Peter Chrysologus says: "Joseph is called a just man, because he possessed every virtue in an eminent degree." We shall briefly consider to day *how St. Joseph manifested his justice. I* say that this great saint manifested his justice—

I. By doing the will of God in all things, and
II. By subjecting himself to the will of God in all things

Part I.

God is infinitely holy; he wills and does only what is good, and hates and detests what is evil. From this it evidently follows that only he *who does the will of God in all things* deserves to be called a *just man.*

i. In this respect especially, St. Joseph manifested his justice. His whole life was dedicated to God, he knew no more important business than in every situation to life to do that which he recognized to be the will of God. The gospel furnishes evident proof of this.

(λ.) As we read in the gospel of this day, when Mary was espoused to Joseph she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. God had not yet revealed to Joseph the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ; neither would the Blessed Virgin inform him of what had taken place, lest she might appear proud of the wonderful grace imparted to her by God. Joseph, therefore, was sorely puzzled. Of Mary he could suspect nothing evil, for he was perfectly convinced of her sanctity and fear of God, and knew that even in the married state she wished to live as a virgin, and that only on this condition she had espoused herself to him. At most the suspicion could arise within him that violence had been done to her, and that against her will she had been brought into this condition. What was he to do? Should he question her? But he feared to grieve her by such a question. Should he ask the advice of others? He could not do this, for thereby he would bring her into ill repute. Should he take her to himself? He was not allowed to do this, because the law strictly forbade his living with a bride who had violated her fidelity. In order not to

sin against the will of God in any case, he resolved to put her away privately. God, however, ordained otherwise; he disclosed to Joseph the adorable mystery which had been perfected in Mary. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: *Joseph, Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.* How rejoiced was Joseph at this heavenly message! How cheerfully he complied with it! St. Matthew tells us that "Joseph rising up from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took unto him his wife."—*Matt.* 1: 24.

(£) Another instance, proving how readily Joseph fulfilled the will of God, is his flight into Egypt. Shortly after the birth of the divine Child an angel again appeared to him in sleep, saying: "Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child, to destroy him."—*Matt. 2*: 13. A remarkable command. How many objections could be raised against it. Could not Joseph have replied: How is it possible to fly at once with the divine Child and his mother, when I am not prepared? How is it possible for me to undertake so long and dangerous a journey, ignorant of the roads and without any means of subsistence? Must I fly into Egypt, a country entirely unknown to me, inhabited only by pagans? How can I support the divine Child and his Mother; how protect them from danger and misery in a country and among a people whose language is unknown to me? And why must Jesus fly from Herod? Is not the Son of God powerful enough to frustrate the murderous designs of an earthly prince? Such and similar objections St. Joseph could have made to the angel; but no, as soon as the will of God was made known to him, he had no other thought than to obey. "Who arose," says the gospel, "and took the child and his mother by night and retired into Egypt."—*Matt.* 2:14.

(i.) The angel had told Joseph to remain in Egypt until he should tell him to return. Joseph, therefore, was in perfect uncertainty regarding his sojourn in Egypt, whether it was to be of long or short duration. Even in this instance he does not remonstrate; silently he obeys the command of the angel, journeys into Egypt and remains there until the death of Herod. There can be no doubt but that he endured many hardships in that country; that with Mary and the divine Child he frequently suffered want and experienced many other tribulations, but the thought, "it is according to the will of God that I am here," strengthened him and enabled him to persevere until it pleased God to send an

angel again to tell him to return with the Child and his other Into the land of Israel,—*Mall.* 2: 20:

2. Herein St. Joseph gives us an excellent example, teaching us the road we must take in order to arrive at true justice. This does not consist in the practice of certain good works, such as prayer, mortification or alms. The Pharisees prayed much, fasted, gave alms and performed many other good works, and yet Christ said to his disciples: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 20. Therefore, Jesus teaches us to pray: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," The more zealously we fulfil the will of God in all things, the more perfect is our justice, and the greater the measure of happiness we may expect in heaven. But how do we know what is the will of God? It is easy to answer this question.

(a.) Our conscience makes known to us the will of God; for it tells us what is right, and what is wrong; it urges us to do good, and to avoid evil, it rewards us with contentment, consolation and joy after we have acted rightly, and punishes us with remorse, disquietude, fear and anguish when we have done evil. Therefore, if you always pay attention to the voice of conscience and do what it demands, you act according to the will of God; for the voice of conscience is the voice of God; it is, as it were, the tongue, by which God speaks and reveals to you his will. Therefore, the Apostle says of the pagans that God has inscribed his holy law in their hearts, their conscience giving testimony thereof. Consequently, those are just before God who follow the voice of their conscience.

(£.) The commandments of God make known to us the will of God. We need only refer to the ten commandments of God and the six precepts of the Church, and ask ourselves whether we do or omit what they command or forbid. If we obey these commandments and precepts we fulfil the will of God and are of the number of the just. But he who transgresses only one of them in an important matter, he who neglects to hear mass on Sundays and holidays of obligation, or commits impurity, or is guilty of theft, slander and detraction, or eats meat on Fridays, is to be numbered among sinners because he acts in a manner that is contrary to the plainly expressed will of God.

(ci) Your priests in the pulpit and in the confessional tell you what is the will of God. They are the representatives of Christ upon earth and are commissioned to announce to men the will of God. "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching

them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." —*Matt.* 28: 19, 20. "He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you despiseth me."—*Luke 10:* 16. He, therefore, who does not listen to the teaching and admonitions of his pastors, who disdains what they tell him in the pulpit and confessional, is not just. Though the world may call him a just man, because he does not steal or rob, yet before God he is not so, because he does not do his will. To him the words of our Lord are applicable: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17. But true justice also requires *that we subject ourselves lo the will of God in all things.*

Part II.

i. St. Joseph was subject to the will of God in all things.

(a.) In his poverty. He was a descendant of the royal house of David, but he was poor and obliged to earn his livelihood by hard labor. He was a carpenter by trade, and never ate a piece of bread which he had not earned in the sweat of his brow. The poverty and lowliness of his state may have been for him the more oppressive as he had also to provide for the divine Infant and his mother Mary. Yet he was always patient and resigned. He was not of the number of those married people who, when want and poverty visit them, break out into complaints and recriminations and thus increase their trials. If you ask such people why they live in discord they will tell you that it is poverty that causes their quarrels. But poverty should not occasion quarrels; on the contrary, it should be a motive to thereto cling closer together in order to console and encourage each other, and in this way to alleviate their burden.

(Z>.) *In the various tribulations and difficulties of life.* I shall mention only two examples. Joseph travels with Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be enrolled there according to an edict of Augustus Cæsar. Fatigued by the long and laborious journey, and solicitous for Mary, he seeks a night's lodging, but finds none. Wherever he knocks he meets with a cold reception; they are everywhere refused with the words, "we have no room". Night advances, but Joseph and Mary have not yet found a lodging. He sees himself compelled to leave Bethlehem and to seek shelter in a miserable stable. How much must he have felt this abandonment and his inability to assist Mary, whose delicate condition required affectionate care. But he preserves the most perfect patience and subjects himself silently and with confidence to the will of God, according to whose inscrutable wisdom this severe

trial had come upon him. In Jerusalem Joseph loses the divine Child, who was then only twelve years old, for, without the knowledge of his parents, he had remained in the temple. As men and women on these pilgrimages did not travel together, butin separate companies, Joseph, on leaving Jerusalem, thought that the Child was with Mary, and Mary thought he was with Joseph. When they stopped for the night they discovered their mutual error. What anguish for Joseph! He could neither eat, drink, nor sleep; perplexed by a thousand anxieties he spent the night watching, and, as soon as day began to dawn, returned with Alary to Jerusalem to seek the Child. Arrived there he wandered through all the streets of that large city, seeking and inquiring everywhere for the beloved Child, but no one could give him any information concerning him. Finally, after a three days' search this heavy trial came to an end; Joseph found the lost Child in the temple. How did he act? Did one ill-natured word escape his lips? No; during the whole time of this painful loss he manifested not the least sign of impatience, and he was still perfectly calm and resigned. God ordained it so, he thought, and knew the reason why. His will be done.

2. We too must resign ourselves to the will of God in every situation of life; for so long as we do not make a sacrifice of our will to God we are not of the number of the just, no matter how good our moral conduct may be. Naturalists say that the golden eagle rejects every part of his prey, except the heart, which he eats with avidity. In like manner God desires only our heart; therefore he says: "My son, give me thy heart."—*Prov.* 23 : 26. Nothing else will satisfy him. He who does good, that is, he who loves to go to church, shuns public amusements and entertainments, practices works of mercy, dresses plainly, but does these and other things merely because it corresponds with his inclination, may be a just man in the eyes of the world, but he is not before God. Neither are those to be counted among the just, who, though they otherwise lead a good life, murmur and complain under crosses and afflictions and do not resign themselves to the will of God. But if for the love of God and to show your submission to him you bear a word of calumny, a pain or an accident with patience, it is a sign that you belong to the just, provided your conduct be in other respects according to the divine law. The saints understood this : for this reason they were intent on nothing so much as on making their will conformable to the will of God, When the venerable Peter Avila heard that a sick priest whom he greatly loved and revered had complained that he was obliged to lie there in idleness, unable to do anything for the honor of God, he wrote to him: ''My dear friend, we are in this world to do the will of God; for this reason we pray

daily: Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Do not disquiet yourself and worry about what you might do if you were well, but be satisfied to be sick so long as it pleases God. For if you realty seek to do the will of God, it must be indifferent to you whether you be ill orwell." When St. Elizabeth, duchess of Thuringia, heard the melancholy news of the death of her husband, she said: " O Lord, my God, thou knowest that the presence of my husband would rejoice me more than all the enjoyments of the earth; but since it has pleased thee to take him from me, I resign myself to thy holy will with my whole heart. If I could recall my husband to life by the loss of only a single hair of my head, I would not do it, if it were against thy will." Our Lord appeared once to St. Gertrude on her sick-bed and said: "Choose, my daughter, that which you desire most, good health or sickness." Of which did she make choice? Good health? No. Sickness? No. Because she did not know what our Lord thought best to give her, she said: " Lord, not my will, but thine be done."

PERORATION.

Of such a disposition were the saints. The will of God was to them all in all. Follow their example. Your will should resemble a shadow. As this always assumes the shape and motion of the object, so your will should accommodate itself to the will of God in all things. Since God is your Lord and Creator, -what is more reasonable than that you should resign yourselves unconditionally to his will? He is your Father, he desires only what is good for you; should not this induce you to resign yourselves unreservedly to his holy will? Moreover, resignation to his holy will enables you to lead a quiet, contented life; for weakness of mind, discontent and impatience originate only in a want of résignation to the will of God. Make the resolution according to the example of St. Joseph to do the will of God, and to subject yourselves to it in all things, for in this alone consists true justice, which prepares for you peace and contentment here below, and the eternal joys of heaven hereafter. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

ST. JOSEPH, CHIEF STEWARD OF GOD AND A TEACHER OF MEN.

Go to Joseph: and do all that he shall say to you.—Gen. **41: 55.**

Bible history relates that Pharaoh, king of Egypt, appointed Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob, steward over his house and all his treasures and governor of all his people. "Thou shalt be over my house, and at the commandment of thy mouth all the people shall obey : only in the kingly throne will I be above thee." —*Gen.* 41: 40. When the years of famine, which Joseph had foretold, made their appearance, the people came to Pharaoh, asking relief. The king referred the suppliants to Joseph, saying : "Go to Joseph, and do all that he shall say to you." We celebrate to-day the feast of another Joseph whom not an earthly king, but God himself, the Lord of heaven and earth, made steward of his house and of his treasures and the protector of his people ; this is Joseph, the virgin spouse of Mary, and the foster-father of Jesus. I say to you what Pharaoh said to his subjects: "Go to Joseph: and do all that he shall say to you." Venerate Joseph, seek his protection and do what his example teaches, for this great saint is, as we shall hear to-day—

I. The chief steward of God whom we must venerate and invoke, and
II. A teacher of men whom we must imitate.

Part I.

I. St. Joseph was *Gods chief steward on earth*—

(«.) As foster-father of Jesus Christ. Of all the saints of the male sex there is not one in the Old or the New Testament whom God so honored and raised to so high a dignity as St. Joseph. What can be thought more sublime and honorable than the intimate communion with Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, which Joseph enjoyed as his foster-father? It was granted tohim to live for years with Jesus Christ under the same roof, to carry him as an Infant in his arms, to feed and clothe him and to protect him from the persecutions of his enemies; to work, to pray and to converse with him as familiarly as a father with his own child, even so as to be generally looked upon as his real father : "Being (as it was supposed) the son of Joseph."—*Luke* 3:23. Now, when

God raised St. Joseph to such high honors is it not right that we should venerate him? "What angel has merited the grace to be called the father of the Son of God? God has by the name of father conferred a greater honor on St. Joseph than on all the Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles. For they have received only the name of servant of Christ, whereas St. Joseph has received the name of father of Christ."—5/. *Basil.*

(A) *As the head ofthe Holy Family.* This family is indeed small in number, but great, infinitely great, because it comprises the Son of God and the Mother of God. St. Joseph was master in this family; he commanded, and the Son of God obeyed. Josue once commanded the sun to stand still, and it obeyed and stood still for twelve hours until the Israelites had destroyed the hostile army of the morrhites—*Jos.* 10: 12. Who does not admire the power of Josue whom the sun, that great planet, obeyed ? But we are still more astonished at the power of Joseph whom he who created the sun obeys. The chancellor Gerson, a great lover of Mary and Joseph, exclaims: "O wonderful elevation ! O incomparable miracle ! The Mother of God, the Queen of heaven, calls thee (St. Joseph) her lord, and the Incarnate Son of God calls thee father and obeys thee!"

(i.) *As a cooperator in the work of redemption.* God revealed to St. Joseph many things relating to the redemption of man. When he was minded to put away privately Mary, his spouse, whom he saw with child, God manifested to him by an angel that she had conceived of the Holy Ghost, and that he should call the son whom she should bring forth, Jesus, for he would save his people from their sins.—*Matt.* 1:19-21. Herein God revealed to St. Joseph the important truth of the faith that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Ghost and is the promised Redeemer of the world. Even in this revelation Joseph appears as a cooperator in the work of redemption. But as such he appears in a still greater degree when we behold him nursing the divine Infant with the greatest affection, protecting him from dangers and providing for his wants with the greatest devotion, and thus, to speak humanly, enabling Jesus Christ to do everything that was required for the redemption of man according to the decree of God. Thus, in order to place the divine Infant beyond the reach of the wicked Herod, he fled with the Child and his mother Alary into Egypt and remained there until Herod and those who sought the life of the Child were dead. You perceive therefore that St. Joseph was a steward of God on earth, and as such deserves our particular veneration.

2. He is also *Gods steward in heaven,* for through him God imparts numerous graces and benefits to man. We should there·

fore place great confidence in him and invoke his assistance in all our necessities. His sanctity should encourage us to this. There is no doubt that the saints are very powerful with God, because they are his friends, and he loves them as a father loves his good children. Therefore, St. James exhorts us to pray for one another, and assigns as a reason that the prayer of the just man avails much: "Pray for one another, that you may be saved: for the continual prayer of a just man availeth much?' — *James* 5: 16. Numerous examples of Holy Writ corroborate the words of St. James. God was frequently on the point of destroying the Israelites on account of their sins, but through the intercession of Moses he spared them again and again. Samuel prayed to the Lord to save his people from the hands of the Philistines, and his prayer was heard.—*I. Kings*. 7: 8, *et seq.* Yes, so great a power has the prayer of the saints over the heart of God, that upon Abraham's intercession he would have spared Sodom and Gomorrha, if only ten just men had been found in those cities. Now Joseph is also holy, for he is called in the Sacred Scripture a just man; that is a man possessing every virtue. It is also certain that he attained a high degree of sanctity, otherwise God would not have distinguished him above all others by choosing him to be the foster-father of his Son. "I believe," says St. Bernard, "that St. Joseph was the most pure in virginity, the most profound in humility, the most ardent in love, the most exalted in contemplation. What power, then, must God not have given to the foster-father of his Son, as he was so distinguished for his virtues and led a life of such eminent sanctity?" We may, therefore, firmly believe that God will refuse St. Joseph no request which he makes on behalf of those who seek his intercession, for his power is greater than that of any other saint. This is also the opinion of St. Bernard, who says: "To some of the saints the power is given to help us in particular circumstanes, but St. Joseph can assist us in every need, he can protect all who have recourse to him." St. Teresa, that great lover of St. Joseph says: "I do not remember to have asked St. Joseph for anything without obtaining it. The great graces which God has granted to me through him, and the many dangers of body and soul from which he has delivered me, truly deserve admiration. It seems that God has imparted to the other saints the grace of assisting those who have recourse to their intercession in a particular necessity, but of the glorious St. Joseph I have experienced that he helps in every need." Pharaoh said: "Go to Joseph." What else can I say? Go to Joseph then and venerate him profoundly; he deserves your homage on account of the incomparable dignity to which God has elevated him. Go to Joseph in your temporal and spiritual necessities and choose him especially for your patron in your dying hour. Have great confidence in him,

for on account of his great virtue and holiness he is most powerful with God. To render yourselves worthy of his protection endeavor to follow him as *your teacher.*

Part II.

St. Joseph teaches us most excellent lessons in regard to our conduct. I shall place before you only three of his virtues for imitation. These are:

1. *His humility.*

(a.) St. Joseph was of noble extraction, a descendant of the royal house of David; but of all the power and glory of David and of the Jewish kings nothing remained to him but the memory. His race degenerated more and more, till finally it lost crown and sceptre and sank into lowliness and poverty. His home was no longer in a palace at Jerusalem, but in a humble house at Nazareth, where as an artisan he earned his daily bread. What a humiliation! Joseph, however, endured it patiently and lived contentedly in his poverty. In the meantime, with all his lowliness, God honored him in a manner which far surpassed all the distinctions of this world. He was favored with angelic apparitions and was initiated into the inexpressible mystery of the Incarnation of Christ; he saw the shepherds, the Wise Men from the East, Simeon and Anna, adore his Foster-Son, and to the end of his life he was permitted to dwell with the son of God; Christ even called him his father, and was subject to him. Notwithstanding all these distinctions, St. Joseph was not proud, he sought not the praise of man, but remained in all things obedient.

(5.) Of St. Joseph learn humility, the fundamental virtue of a Christian life. If, like St. Joseph, you belong to an inferior station in life, be not ashamed of it, and have no inordinate desire for honor and distinction. In this our age of materialism it is pride that makes men esteem themselves to be more than they really are. Many who live in miserable hovels and whose circumstances are the most needy, endeavor to appear by their clothing and conduct as if they were persons of affluence. Many children of laborers and of other poor people appear on Sundays and holidays in such costly attire that one is tempted to believe that they are the children of wealthy parents. Is not this pride, which is punished sooner or later in this -world, and which will surely be followed by misery and poverty, especially in more advanced years? Be satisfied with the position in which God has placed you, though it may be the lowest and poorest, and guard against

desiring to be more than you really are; live and dress according to your station. If you are in comfortable circumstances, wealthy, honored, and respected, do not exalt yourselves above your fellow men, do not think yourselves better than others, much less despise them. That which you may possess above your neighbor you have not from yourselves, but from God, from whom we receive every good and perfect gift. "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received why dost thou glory?"—*I. Cor.* 4: 7. The higher you are in the world the more you should humble yourself; gratitude towards God and the salvation of your soul require it.

2. *His obedience.*

(a.) St. Joseph obeyed *temporal authority.* By the order of Augustus he undertook with Mary a long and tedious journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, in order to have their names enrolled. He obeyed *spiritual authority,* for he conscientiously performed everything which the Mosaic law prescribed. Thus he caused the divine Infant to be circumcised; he went with him and Mary to the temple at Jerusalem, to enable Mary to fulfil the law in regard to the purification of women and the presentation of the first-born to the Lord; he also went every year to Jerusalem to celebrate there the pasch in the temple. Finally, he obeyed *God.* When the angel of the Lord said to him, "fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife," he hesitated not; when he aroused him in the darkness of night and commanded him to fly into Egypt with Mary and the divine Infant, he immediately obeyed, and when he told him to return into his own country, he again obeyed with the greatest promptitude.

(£.) Who would not be edified at this universal and prompt obedience of St. Joseph and encouraged to practice this important virtue on every occasion? Therefore, be obedient to the temporal authorities and perform what they ordain and command. It is the will of God that you obey the law in all things that are not manifestly wrong and sinful. "Let every soul be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation."—*Rom.* 13: 1, 2. Especially obey your parents, for "they watch as being to render an account of your souls."—*Heb.* 13: 17. Obey the Church, observe her precepts and ordinances, and do what your pastors from the Dulpit and in the confessional exhort you to do. Consider them as the representatives of God, and do not forget the words of Christ: "He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that

despiseth you, despiseth me. And he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."—*Luke* 10: 16. Finally, obey God by observing all his commandments without exception or reserve. This obedience is absolutely necessary for salvation, according to the words of Christ: "*If* thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

3. *His patience in sufferings.*

(a.) St. Joseph's path through life was not strewn with roses but with thorns, and indeed with many thorns. He lived in a state of poverty and had to endure all the disagreeable things that poverty brings in its train. And what severe trials was he not called upon to endure! The divine Infant was scarcely born when he was obliged to leave his own country and flee into Egypt, in order to place the Child beyond the reach of the wicked Herod. What difficulties he must have encountered on this long journey and during his sojourn in Egypt, that foreign pagan land. And who can describe the sorrow and grief of St. Joseph when he lost the divine Child in Jerusalem? With what anguish did he not seek him for three days, till he finally found him in the temple? And behold, in all these sufferings and trials St. Joseph was perfectly resigned; not the least impatience found room in his heart. His will was always united with the divine will; his maxim was: "Whatever God ordains or permits is well done."

(3.) When St. Joseph had to suffer so much and endured all with so much patience and resignation, why do we complain when we are sometimes visited by sufferings and afflictions? Are we as innocent and holy as St. Joseph? Alas! we are sinners who from our childhood have frequently and grievously offended God. Should we not, then, accept with patience the sufferings and trials which God sends us, in order to do penance for our sins and, in some measure, to atone to the divine justice for the offenses committed against it? Should we not even thank God for the sufferings inflicted on us, since they are perhaps very necessary to preserve us from levity, dissipation and vice, and to keep us in the path of virtue? Are we not taught by the word of God that nothing is more meritorious and salutary than to bear sufferings and afflictions with patience? Does not the Apostle say: "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."—*II Cor.* 4: 17. And if Christ was obliged to suffer and so to enter into his glory, can we expect to attain salvation in any other way? Let us take St. Joseph for our model, and learn of him to be patient and resigned to the will of God in all the sufferings and tribulations of life.

PERORATION.

As we have seen, St. Joseph is a steward of God and a teacher of men. As steward of God, because God committed to him his greatest treasures upon earth, Jesus and Mary, and because now in heaven he can obtain for us all the treasures of grace which are necessary and salutary for us. He is also a teacher of men, because he shines before us by his holiness, especially his humility, his obedience and his patience. Venerate St. Joseph and do not fail to recommend yourselves to his protection in all that concerns body and soul. But particularly pray to him that he would interest himself for our holy Catholic Church, whose patron he is, that she may be victorious over all her enemies and enjoy the blessings of peace. Finally, as St. Joseph is the patron of a good death, pray to him daily that he may assist you in your last struggle and obtain for you the most desirable of all graces, the grace of a happy death. With a view to venerate him worthily and to make yourselves partakers of his protection, resolve to imitate his virtues. If thus you venerate St. Joseph as the steward of God, and follow him as the teacher of men, you may expect to obtain through him prosperity and blessings in this life, and eternal felicity in the life to come. Amen.

THIRD SKETCH.

HOW WE MUST WORK ACCORDING TO THE EXAMPLE OF ST. JOSEPH.

Joseph, her husband, being a just man . . . was minded to put her away privately.—*Matt.* 1: 19.

St. Joseph, whose feast we celebrate to-day, is a glorious saint, who shows us by his example how all, and especially those who have to labor constantly throughout their lives, can work out their salvation. His sanctity cannot be doubted, for if he had not been holy in an eminent degree, God would not have chosen him to be the virgin-spouse of Mary, and foster-father of his Incarnate Son; neither would Holy Writ call him a just man, for only those are just, in the sense of Sacred Scripture, who conscientiously observe the commandments of God and perseveringly walk in the path of virtue. But how did St. Joseph become a just man? Did he, perhaps, perform extraordinary deeds? Did he, like the Apostles, preach the gospel? Did he work miracles?

Did he die a martyr for the holy faith? No, the gospel relates nothing of him in regard to such things; he was simply an artisan who spent the greater part of his life in the shop, working hard to gain an honest livelihood for himself, and for Jesus and Mary. It was by work principally that Joseph became holy and secured his salvation. Thus, we also can become holy and be saved, if, following the example of St. Joseph, we work—

I. *With God, and*
II. *For God.*

I. St. Joseph worked *with God* in the proper sense, *because he worked with Jesus, his divine Foster-Son, and in his presence.* Joseph lived under the same roof with Jesus at Nazareth up to the time of his death. There can be no doubt that the Child often came into the shop, watched Joseph at his work, and when he became older himself assisted his foster-father. For this reason the Jews of Nazareth believed our divine Saviour to be the son of the carpenter Joseph. We can easily imagine that Joseph, through reverence for Jesus, whom he knew to be the Son of God, worked with great deligence, preserved patience in all the hardships incident to his state of life and, in general, so conducted himself that God looked down upon him with pleasure and rewarded his labors with heaven. Herein you must imitate St. Joseph. Although you do not see God with your corporal eyes, as Joseph saw Jesus, he is, as faith teaches you, invisibly present and sees all you do. You must, therefore, have God before your eyes in all your works, and this no doubt will enable you to work diligently and preserve patience. If the presence of an earthly employer banishes indolence and animates your zeal, will not this be done the more effectually if in all our employments and labors we vividly represent to ourselves the presence of God, the Lord of heaven and earth? How can any one be negligent in his occupations when he considers that God is near him, sees all his actions and desires him to work diligently. This thought is the strongest incentive to zeal in our vocation, and, as it were, the power that puts the wheels of our activity in motion. Therefore, God himself said to Abraham: "Walk before me, and be perfect."—*Gen.* 17:1. Because Abraham concientiously complied with this commandment and always had God before his eyes, he fulfilled all his duties most zealously and was perfect in his conduct. In all your works and business transactions often think that God, your Lord and Father, is near you. Place yourselves in his presence, particularly when you are obliged to do some

disagreeable and laborious work; say even then; "God sees me, it is his will that I do this." This remembrance of God will certainly banish every temptation to indolence and impatience from your heart, and urge you to perform all your works with zeal, patience and perseverance.

2. *Because he united prayer with labor.* "*Ora et labora*"—pray and work. There is no doubt that Joseph not only worked diligently, but that he also prayed with great fervor and constancy. How could the gospel call him a just man if he had been slothful in prayer? A man who will not hear of prayer is not just. The fact related of him in the gospel, that he annually went to Jerusalem at Easter to pray there in the temple, leads us to infer that he loved prayer and consequently performed his daily devotions with great fervor and perfection. I imagine I can see him on his knees early in the morning, praying with ardent devotion, and frequently during the day raising his heart to God in pious ejaculations, and again in the evening casting himself on his knees to conclude the day with devout prayers. Thus St. Joseph sanctified his work by prayer, drew God's blessing upon it and rendered it meritorious for eternity. You also should unite your labors with prayer, for on prayer depends your success and the blessing you wish for your labors. He who believes himself able to accomplish everything by his own power and ingenuity is greatly deceived, for "unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."—*Ps.* 126: 1. Many are zealous and active in their calling, they perform everything with prudence and circumspection and are busily occupied from morning till night. One would suppose that everything prospered with them; but such is not the case; on the contrary, nothing succeeds; untoward circumstances frustrate all their labors and pains. Whence comes this? Perhaps, from a neglect of prayer. They do not say their morning or evening prayers; they neglect to hear mass on Sundays and holidays; at their work they never raise their hearts to God; they do not value prayer much under any circumstances, and when pressed by the cares of business they find no time for it at all. Thus it happens that God withdraws his blessing from them, giving them an unmistakable proof that without him they can do nothing. Do not act like these slothful, lukewarm Catholics, but always unite your work with prayer. Say not only your morning and evening prayers, but frequently during your work raise your heart and mind to God and ask his blessing. If you have a task of importance before you, do not fail to recommend youselves to God in prayer that he may bless your undertaking and grant you a favorable issue. If you observe this rule, God's blessing will never be wanting to you, and, what is more important still, he

will look with favor upon your work and reward you hereafter in heaven.

3. *Because he labored in a state of grace.* As already mentioned, the gospel says that Joseph was a *fust* man; but justice in the sense of the gospel excludes at least every mortal sin. Joseph, therefore, was free from every mortal sin, and it is also a pious belief that by a special grace of God he also preserved himself from every venial sin. Hence he always worked in a state of grace, for which reason God looked downupon his labors with pleasure, blessed them and rewarded them eternally in heaven. You should also be solicitous to perform all your labors in a state of grace. He who lives in a state of sin is an enemy of God and has every reason to fear that his undertakings will prove a failure. As an evidence of this, call to mind the history of Saul. When he had sinned and apostatized from God, prosperity and glory departed from him, and his end was one of misery. Add to this, that those who live in a state of sin need not expect any reward hereafter for all their labors and exertions; they are separated from Christ, and resemble a branch severed from the vine, which can bring forth no fruit. How deplorable the state of such persons! They labor early and late in the sweat of their brow, and never enjoy any comfort so long as they live. If they would walk in the fear of God and at least avoid mortal sins, they would daily have opportunities of acquiring treasures for heaven; but spending as they do the years of their life in sin they labor in vain, and whatever they accomplish is of no value for eternity. Their lot is a hard one in this world, but a sadder one awaits them hereafter; for unless they are thoroughly converted they will be delivered to eternal perdition. Guard, therefore, against every mortal sin, and if unfortunately you should commit one, make a sincere confession immediately in order to recover sanctifying grace, and thus you will render your labors and concerns meritorious for heaven.

i. St. Joseph also gives us a beautiful example, teaching us to *labor for God.* As foster-father of Jesus, he considered it his most important duty to take care of the divine Infant, and to provide all that was necessary for his support. All his toil was devoted to his divine Foster-Child. When busy in his shop from early mom till late at night, planing boards and performing all the work incident to his trade, he did all for the love of Tesus: when he became fatigued and the sweat poured from his brow he thought of Jesus, and said to himself: For the love of my Jesus. When

he was obliged to do work which involved danger, as is often the case with carpenters, he did it calmly and fearlessly, because he labored for Jesus, and for love of him feared no danger. We find St. Joseph in different places: in Bethlehem, where the divine Infant was born; in Egypt, whither he had to flee in order to place the Child beyond the reach of Herod; and finally at Nazareth, where Jesus grew into youth and manhood and remained to his thirtieth year. In all these places Joseph devoted himself to the fulfilment of his duties as foster-father of Jesus, everywhere laboring for Jesus, his Lord and God.

2. We also must labor for God for two reasons:

(a.) *Because all works, even the best, which are not done for God, are without value in his sight.* For this reason many labor in vain; the sufferings and hardships which they undergo do not merit for them any reward hereafter. Shopkeepers, farmers and laborers work hard in the shop and in the field from week to week, and why? Only for the sake of temporal prosperity. We find servants who labor diligently; why? To please their employers, to be praised and rewarded. What shall we say of these and all other laborers who do not work for God? What benefit will accrue to them from all their anxiety and labors? At most a temporal, but in no case an eternal, gain. As a master will not pay wages to those servants who do not work for him, but for someone else, so God will not reward the efforts which one makes purely from worldly motives. When such laborers appear before the judgment-seat of God, they will hear to their consternation that all they have done merits no reward. A noble descendant of the royal family of Poland, who had labored long and zealously for the welfare of his country, but who in all those long years had done nothing for the honor of God or the salvation of his own soul, one night had a most remarkable dream. He seemed to be in a beautiful country peopled with a great number of heavenly spirits, who were all writing very rapidly. He approached one of them and asked him what he was writing down so carefully. He replied: "We are angels of God, and upon these leaves we write the merits of men." Whereupon the man hesitated not to ask if he could see what was written upon his leaf. "Certainly," replied the angel, and searching among the numerous leaves he showed him the page which contained his merits. But what terror seized him when he saw that the whole leaf was almost entirely blank, though he had labored and toiled so long and zealously. "How is it possible," he said, "that I have scarcely any merits for eternal life?" "My friend," replied the angel, "on these leaves, which form the book of life, nothing is written except what men do *for God and for love of him.* This

dream made a deep impression upon the man, and from that time he labored earnestly, not for himself or for the world, but for God and the honor of his holy name.

(£.) Oh, that the dream of this nobleman would produce the same effect in you. Never lorget that *only those works which are donefor God andfor the love ofhim will be rewarded in eternity.* How happy therefore you will be, if in all your works you think of God and perform them for love of him. Not the smallest action, however insignificant, will then be lost; each one will find its reward before the throne of the divine Judge. In heaven there are many saints who belonged to a lowly state, and who during their whole life could do nothing great in the eyes of the world. St. Isidore was a farmer, St. Deodatus a shoemaker, St. Florus a mason, St. Onesius a servant, St. Nothburga a servant. How did these, and with them millions of others of low extraction, save their souls and become saints? Chiefly through the good intention with which they labored; it ennobled their most menial and insignificant works and rendered them meritorious before God. Here, then, is an easjT way for you to labor with fruit; *do all for God.* "A good intention," says a renowned spiritual writer, "is a heavenly alchemy by which iron is changed into gold, that is, by which the most insignificant and lowly actions, such as eating, sleeping, walking, working, are changed into the purest gold of holy love, which acquires for us the joys of heaven. "Since so much depends on a good intention, all the saints paid the greatest attention to this matter. (St. Benedict, St Ignatius, St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi.) A pious hermit had the habit of standing still and looking up to heaven as often as he began work. On being questioned, he said: "I must take good aim that I may not miss the mark." For, as the hunter before he shoots stands still and aims at the object, so that he may not miss it, so before every work you must direct your thoughts to God and make him the end of all your actions.

PERORATION.

Take St. Joseph for your model, and like him work *with Goa and for God. Work with God:* in your occupations at home, in the shop, in the field, often think of God; guard against every mortal sin and pray fervently; especially begin and end your work every day with devout prayer. *Work for God,* and have a good intention in whatever you do. Never begin to work in the morning without saying. "Lord, all that I do to-day, I do for the love of thee, for thy glory." Renew this intention frequently

during the day, especially at the beginning of a new and important affair, that you may always be patient and bring everything to a good end. In the evening, before you retire to rest, offer all your labors and hardships to God and ask him graciously to receive them in union with the merits of Christ. Oh, how fruitful and blessed will your labor and toil thus be! God, *with whom* and *for whom* you work, will look down upon you with pleasure; he will make your days happy here on earth and reward you hereafter with the everlasting joys of heaven. Amen.

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

Lesson.—*Ls.* 7: 10-15. In those days, the Lord spoke to Achaz, saying: Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God, either unto the depth of hell, or unto the height above. And Achaz said: I will not ask: and I will not tempt the Lord. And he said: Hear ye, therefore, O house of David: Is it a small thing for you to be grievous to men, that you are grievous to my God, also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son; and his name shall be called Emmanuel. He shall eat butter and honey, that he may know to refuse the evil, and to choose the good.

Gospel.—*Luke* 1: 26-38. At that time: The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found grace with God: Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: Because no word shall be impossible with God. And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word.

FIRST SKETCH.

THE ANGELUS.

Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus.—Luke 1:31.

God promised a Redeemer to our first parents immediately after their fall.—*Gen.* 3: 15. This consoling promise was accomplished on this day. The Archangel Gabriel brings the message to the Blessed Virgin Mary: *Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus.* The moment Mary gives her consent, saying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word* (*Luke* 1: 38), the only-begotten Son of God descends into her pure womb and assumes human nature through the co-operation of the Holy Ghost. The feast of the Annunciation therefore is most intimately connected with the feast of Christmas, and, like it, is replete with graces, for he whose nativity we celebrate at Christmas became man to-day. We justly commemorate this festival with great solemnity and thank God for the unspeakable grace which he has conferred on us in the Incarnation of his Son. We commemorate this mystery, however, not only to-day, but we call it to mind every day in the prayer known as the *Angelus.* Whenever we say this prayer we profess with a grateful heart that the only-begotten Son of God assumed human nature in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost. Let us meditate to-day on this prayer, and consider that it is—

I. A very venerable and
II. A very salutary prayèr.

Part I.

The *Angelus* is divided into three parts, **to each of which** is subjoined an *Ave.* It is said three times a day, morning, noon and evening. That it is a very venerable devotion is evident—

i. *From its origin.* What is narrated in this prayer occurred on the day on which the Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Blessed Virgin and declared to her that she would become the Mother of God. We can therefore justly say that this prayer originated with the Incarnation, and consequently more than nineteen hundred years ago. The same may be said of the *Ave Maria,* or "Had

Mary," which we recite in the *Angdus.* The first words; "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; Blessed art thou among women," were spoken by the angel when he brought the message to Mary; and with the other words: "And blessed is the fruit of thy womb," Elizabeth saluted Mary when she entered the house of Zachary. The words, "Jesus, Holy Mary," etc., were added by the Church and are most closely connected with the Incarnation of Christ in Mary, the Blessed Virgin. These words, moreover, are very ancient, for, as is universally acknowledged, the Church added them in the Council of Ephesus, in the year 430, to refute the heretic Nestorius, thus solemnly declaring Mary to be the *Mother of God.* In a prayer-book, used by Severn, patriarch of Alexandria, in the year 647, we find a prayer which corresponds with our *Angelus,* with the exception of a few words. It reads thus; "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit, which is in thy womb, Jesus Christ. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners. Amen." According to the testimony of many historians, Pope Urban II. ordained that the B. Virgin should be saluted morning and evening at the threefold sound of the church bell (1095), in order to obtain of God the possession of the Holy Land. Gregory IX. renewed this ordinance in the year 1239; Calistus III. (1456) required it co be observed also at noon. It was not however until the Pontificate of Paul III. (1523—34) that the *Angelus* took its present familiar form. The *Angelus* is therefore very venerable on account of its origin, since it comes direct from God and has been recited for centuries by all good Catholics.

2. *From its contents.* What does this prayer commemorate? The mystery of the Incarnation of Christ, which is the foundation of our hope and the source of all graces. If the Son of God had not become man, we should have been deprived of all the graces which Christianity has brought us, we should still be languishing in the bonds of error and sin, and having no means of redemption, we should be delivered to eternal perdition. Now judge for yourselves, is not the *Angelus* which commemorates so great a mystery of divine love, the Incarnation of Christ, a very venerable prayer? Does not the Church act rightly in admonishing us to say this prayer daily with the greatest devotion? It is the custom of the Mahometans to look three times a day towards Mecca, where the founder of their religion, Mahomet, was born, and in long prayers to give thanks to him for the benefit of their faith. Should not we Christians, then, return thanks to God for the Incarnation of his Son, in whom he has given us all things? When the saints contemplated this wonderful mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, they were enraptured and could only

exclaim: "O love of our Redeemer, what hast thou not done to rescue us from perdition !" St. Mary Magdalen ofPazzi frequently and with many tears contemplated the love of Jesus in his Incarnation, and was impressed with so great a veneration for this holy mystery, that on her heart were found engraved the words: *Et verbum carofactum est*—"And the word was made flesh." Hence it is certainly not too much for us to love to say the *Angelus,* which commemorates a mystery so full of grace and divine love

3. *From the fact that we say it three times a day.* We do this **to** put us in mind that *the Incarnation of Christ is the work of* ***the*** *Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.*

(a.) *The work of the Father;* for it is he who decreed to send his Son into the world for our redemption. For this reason Christ frequently says that his Father sent him; and the Apostle writes: "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law; that he might redeem them who were under the law."—*Gal.* 4 : 4, 5. As often as the Incarnation of Christ is mentioned, we should raise our hearts in gratitude to the Father "who so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son" *ffohn* 3: 16) for its redemption. Where is there an earthly father who to rescue a man would make such a sacrifice?

(Æ) *Of the Son; for* it is he who assumed human nature in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and was born in a stable of Bethlehem as a poor child, who sojourned thirty-three years on earth, and, finally, died an ignominious death on the cross. The angel teaches us this truth when he says to Mary: "The Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." —*Luke* i : 35. St. John teaches us this truth when he writes: "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."—*John* 1:14. The heavenly Father teaches us this truth when **he** solemnly declares Christ to be his Son ; and Christ, himself, when he calls God his Father and himself his Son. Who would not look up to the Son with a thankful heart whenever the Incarnation of Christ is mentioned ?

(c.) *Of the Holy Ghost;* for it is he through whom the Eternal Word assumed human nature in Mary, the Blessed Virgin. Therefore the angel said: *The Holy Ghost shallcome upon thee; and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be bom of thee shall be called the Son of God.* —*Luke* i : 35. Thus the Incarnation is a grace for which we **owe** the most heartfelt thanks to the Holy Ghost.

In admonishing us to say the *Angelus* three times a day, the Church wishes to represent to us the truth that the Incarnation of Christ is a work of the Most Holy Trinity. She calls upon us to say this prayer devoutly *in the morning,* in grateful remembrance of the Father who immediately after the fall promised a Redeemer; *at noon,* in grateful remembrance of the Son of God who became man in the fulness of time; *in the evening,* in grateful remembrance of God the Holy Ghost, through whose cooperation the Son of God became man. Thus we say the *Angelus* three times a day in order to bring to our minds the *Omnipotence of* the *Father,* the *Wisdom* of the *Son,* and the *Love of* the *Holy Ghost,* and to praise and glorify without ceasing the Most Holy Trinity in the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ.

Part II.

The *Angelas* is also a very salutary prayer, for as often as we say it devoutly—

I. *We make a solemn profession of our faith.* When at the ringing of the *Angelus* we see some one make the sign of the cross and pray, we need not ask: Of what faith are you? The fact of his saying the *Angelus* tells us that he is a Catholic. The reason is because no one else, Jew, pagan or Protestant, recites it. As often therefore as we say this prayer we make a profession of our faith, and, as it were, say: I am a Catholic and as such with the help of God I will live and die. How pleasing such a profession of faith is to our divine Saviour he has himself expressed in these words? "Every one therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven."—*Matt,* 10: 32.

2. *We venerate Mary, the Virgin Mother of God.* In the *Angelus* we remind Mary of the greatest grace which she received from God, the grace of her divine Maternity; we salute her with the Archangel Gabriel and Elizabeth as the Blessed of her sex, and with the Catholic Church invoke her intercession in life and death. Will the divine Mother be indifferent to such veneration? No, as often as we salute Mary, she turns her eyes full of mildness upon us and is ready to obtain for us every grace. St. Bonaventure says: "If we often salute the Blessed Virgin in prayer, she in turn will salute us with every consolation and benefit." Another spiritual writer says: "Do you wish to experience the virtue and efficacy of the angelic salutation? Know, then, that it is a heavenly antidote which preserves the soul from the poisonous bite of the infernal serpent and protects her against his strength;

it is a rod with which you can strike this pernicious serpent on the head and overcome all its hostile assaults." We need not therefore wonder that all pious Catholics and lovers of Mary recite the *Angelus* with great fervor and devotion. St. Alphonsus Liguori faithfully recited this prayer three times a day, kneeling down even in the middle of the street, as soon as he heard the bell ring. Afterwards when he had lost his hearing, he gave orders that he should be informed directly the *Angelus* bell began to ring; if he was at table he rose at once and fell on his knees. St. Charles Borromeo was not ashamed to get out of his carriage and recite the *Angelus* in public thoroughfares. St. Vincent of Paul recollected himself, no matter in what place or in what society he was, when he heard the *Angelus* bell; he knelt down and prayed, deeming himself happy to give publicly a proof of his devotion to Mary. His example was imitated by the whole community.

3. *We raise our minds to God.* The *Angelus* bell is rung three times a day, in the morning, at noon and in the evening, in commemoration of, and in thanksgiving for, the benefit of redemption. In the morning, before we go to our daily vocations, the bell invites us to prayer. This is a time well suited for prayer and devotion. Should we not at the beginning of the day recommend ourselves to the protection of God, ask his blessing and grace and at the same time invoke the intercession of Mary? The Church knowing, however, that many of her children do not consider the importance of the day before them, and on that account neglect prayer, cries out to them every morning by the *Angelus* bell: Children,hear my voice, kneel down and pray. And when people are in the turmoil of business, absorbed in earthly cares, all at once the bell resounds, admonishing them in friendly tones to raise their eyes heavenward, and in their temporal concerns not to forget the eternal. Then when the day declines and the weary laborer seeks rest, once more the bell invites him to devotion, so that having commenced the day with God and prayer he may conclude it in the same way. Thus the *Angelus* bell causes us to recollect ourselves at the three principal periods of the day, and to raise our hearts to God in prayer.

4. *We gain an Indulgence in an easy way.* Pope Leo VIH., on the 14th day of September, 1724, granted a plenary indulgence once a month to all those who on their knees devoutly say the *Angelus,* morning, noon and evening, if they worthily receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, and say the customary prayers for an indulgence, according to the intention of the Church. Moreover, all who say it gain an indulgence of a hundred days each time; and if in the evening we add the

Psalm *De -profundis,* or an Our Father and Hail Mary, with, "Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them," for the poor souls in Purgatory, we likewise can gain every time an indulgence of a hundred days.—*Clement XII,* 1736. If we recite this prayer during the whole year, we can on any day, after a worthy confession and communion, having said the usual prayers, gain a plenary indulgence. In order to gain these indulgences it is, however, necessary to say *the Angelus* always in a kneeling posture, except on Saturday evenings, and on Sunday. (During Paschal time, *i. e.,* from Holy Saturday till Trinity Sunday, instead of the *Angelus,* the *Regina Coeli* is said, standing.) He, therefore, who says the *Angelus* devoutly can gain many indulgences, which will afford him great consolation on his death-bed and in eternity.

PERORATION.

Having explained to you how venerable and salutary a prayer is the *Angelus,* I exhort you to recite it devoutly three times a day, morning, noon and evening. Do not permit yourselves to be deterred from this pious practice by the lukewarmness of so many persons. You are Catholics, who believe in the mystery of the Incarnation, which mystery is commemorated in the *Angelus* and is the foundation of your hope and salvation; you are Catholics who cherish a tender love for the Virgin Mother of God and promise yourselves every blessing from her intercession. Truly, if every day and with great devotion we faithfully recite the *Angelus,* we shall find in it an effectual means of leading a pious life and of obtaining a happy death. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

THE INJURY CAUSED BY EVE REPAIRED BY MARY.

Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy -coomb, and shalt bringforth a Son, and thou shalt call his name fesus.—Ltike 1: 31.

The feast which we celebrate to-day is called the Annunciation of Mary, because on this day the Archangel Gabriel announced to Mary that she had been chosen by God to be the Mother of his Son. At the moment when Mary gave her consent, Baying: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me accord*

ing to thy word {Luke 1 : 38), the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God was accomplished; the Son of God assumed human nature in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin. We therefore celebrate to-day a feast of our Lord, viz., the Incarnation of Christ, the only begotten Son of God. At the same time we also turn to Mary and pay her homage, because she it is from whom he took human nature. Mary is the second Eve whom God in his mercy called to repair the injury which the first Eve had brought upon herself and the whole human race, and to accomplish the work of our redemption. This consoling truth shall be the subject of our present meditation. *The injury caused by Eve has been repaired by Mary.*

I. The unbelief of Eve has been repaired by the belief of Mary;
II. The pride of Eve, by the humility of Mary; and
III. The disobedience of Eve, by the obedience of Mary,

Part I.

1. *Our first mother, Eve, sinned by her unbelief,*

(al) God had strictly forbidden our first parents to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. "In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death."—*Gen. 2:* 17. How did it happen that Eve transgressed so strict a commandment? Principally because the devil succeeded in seducing her to *unbelief.* When she remarked to him that she and Adam did not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because God had forbidden it and had said that they should die if they eat thereof, he replied: "No, you shall not die the death. For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil."—*Gen.* 3: 4-5. The choice was now left her to believe either God or the devil. Who would think it possible? she no longer believed God, the eternal truth, but the devil, that liar from the beginning—she wavered in her faith. Thus her fall was certain, for what could deter her from eating the forbidden fruit, when she no longer feared any evil consequences. "She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat."—*Gen.* 3 : 6.

(Æ.) The devil pursues the same course to-day when he tries to lead men into evil; he endeavors to shake their faith. When their conscience is aroused at his temptations and strives to keep them from sin, he says to them: Do not allow yourselves to be disturbed by scruples; this or that is not a sin. Or, Do not believe the priests, they always go to extremes, and never permit

a man to enjoy a pleasure. Or, Look around you, that which you think is a sin, the world holds to be permissible; do not make yourself an exception. Such is the language of the wicked spirit and of his associates. He tries to undermine faith. If he succeeds, his game is won; men lay aside the fear of God and fall into sin. And just for this reason there are so many Catholics now a days who live in forgetfulness of God and renew the vices of the pagans; they permit their faith to be shaken by false maxims, by irreligious discourses, papers and books, and the result is that they do not look upon their injustices and vices as sinful, and therefore commit them without fear.

2. *Mary repaired the sin of Eve by her belief.*

(a.) To-day we see the Archangel in the presence of Mary. He salutes her and announces that she is chosen by God to be the Mother of his Son. She replies: *Hovo shall this be done, because I know not man?—Luke* i: 34. Having made the vow of perpetual chastity, she is determined to keep it inviolate and therefore asks, how it is possible for her to remain a virgin and yet become a mother. The angel satisfies her on this point by explaining to her that she is not to bring forth a mere child of man, but the Son of God; that she is to conceive him not in a natural but in a supernatural manner by the power of the Holy Ghost, and that, notwithstanding her Maternity, her virginal purity would remain unsullied. What mysteries! What strength of faith was requisite to credit such incomprehensible mysteries! But Mary subjects her understanding to faith; it is enough for her to know that the angel speaks to her by the command of God; she believes, and just because she believes she becomes the Mother of God, and changes into a blessing the curse which Eve brought upon the earth by her unbelief.

(i.) Thus faith will also obtain for us grace and salvation, if it always lives in our heart. Oh, it is faith that offers us the strongest motives for observing the commandments of God. How can we transgress the commandments of God when faith teaches that God punishes eternally those who violate them! How can we impenitently persevere in sin, when faith teaches that unconverted sinners will be eternally lost! How is it possible not to serve God with fervor when faith teaches that God will reward us with the unspeakable joys of heaven! Listen attentively to the word of God, value spiritual reading, and from time to time meditate on the truths of our holy faith, for these are effectual means, not only for preserving faith, but also for being strengthened more and more therein.

Part II.

1. *Eve was seduced by Satan to pride, and, therefore, sinned.*

(a.) The devil tempted Eve not only to unbelief but also to *pride*. He said to her: "God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" *(Gen.* 3:5); which was the same as saying, God does not wish well to you and your husband; in eating the fruit of this tree, you will suffer no harm, but will rather derive the greatest advantage therefrom. Now you are subject to God, but as soon as you eat of the fruit, you shall be free; God cannot then command you any more, for you yourselves will be as gods. Now your eyes are dimmed, but eating of the tree of knowledge will cause you to know good and evil, and in your knowledge you will be as great as God. These words ot the father of lies made the deepest impression upon Eve, and kindled in her heart the passion of pride. She no longer desired to obey, but to command, to be no longer a creature, but a god. Blinded, as she was by Satan, she saw the means of her exaltation in eating the forbidden fruit, therefore nothing could deter her from violating the command of God.

(3.) What happened to our first parents will happen to all who permit themselves to be led astray by the spirit of pride. How could it be otherwise? He who wishes to guard against sin and vice, needs the grace of God, for without it he cannot overcome temptation and persevere in virtue. Therefore St. Peter expressly says: "God resisteth the proud but to the humble he giveth grace."—*I. Pet.* 5:5. It is also pride that blinds man and carries him so far that he considers everything that flatters his passions permissible, or at least, not very objectionable. Is it then to be wondered at that the proud man commits the greatest sins without being disturbed in conscience? It is chiefly grievous sins, such as infidelity and heresy, disobedience, rebellion against spiritual and temporal authority, detraction and slander, hatred and enmity to which pride gives birth. When young people become vain and have a passion for fine clothes, etc., they are in the greatest danger of losing their purity. We should, therefore, guard against nothing so much as pride.

2. *Mary, by her humility, repaired Eve's pride.*

(a.) What profound humility Mary exhibits in the moment of her exaltation! When the angel says to her: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women,* she trembles,

for in her humility she cannot believe that these words concern her; she fears delusion, and is diffident because the salutation contains so great a eulogy. "If the angel had told her that she was the greatest sinner on earth, she would not have wondered so much on that account; but when she heard herself praised so extraordinarily, she trembled exceedingly, for in her humility she disdained all praise, and desired only that God, the author and giver of every good gift, should be praised and glorified." — *St. Leonard.* The angel now reveals to her the sublime mystery that confounds man and astonishes angels; he tells her that she is to conceive the Son of God through the Holy Ghost, and that the divine Maternity is to be united with her unsullied virginity. How does Mary receive this information? At such a wonderful exaltation does she not indulge in at least a little vanity? No; the more she is exalted the more she humbles herself. Realizing her own nothingness, she replies: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.* St. Bernard here exclaims; "O my Queen, how was it possible that you entertained so humble an opinion of yourself, when at the same time you possessed such purity, such innocence and such a plenitude of grace? How could a humility so profound take root in you when you knew how much God would honor and exalt you?" "It was this profound humility which drew the Son of God down from heaven into the virginal womb of Mary."—*St. Alphonsus.*

(b.) Humility also obtains for us God's love and grace. St. Augustine says: "Humility is the foundation of all virtues; there is no better preparation for obtaining heavenly gifts." Every grace we need for our eternal salvation is imparted to us if we are humble of heart. Even sinners need not despair of salvation, if they profoundly humble themselves before God. Did not the publican find grace with God on account of his humility? God will not despise a humble and contrite heart. Consider nothing so excellent as humility. It is humility that guards and preserves all other virtues; it is humility that makes us acceptable to God and man. If we are great in merit, let us be little through humility. The more humble we are the more secure is our salvation, for a truly humble soul cannot be lost.

Part III.

1. *Eve sinned grievously by her disobedience.*

(a.) God had given an easy command to our first parents in order to test their obedience; they were allowed to eat of the fruit of all the trees in paradise, one alone excepted, the tree of

knowledge of good and evil. Of the fruit of this tree they were forbidden to eat. What was easier than to obey in a matter so insignificant? But they transgressed even this light commandment. Eve stretched forth her hand to take the forbidden fruit, and ate thereof. Not content with having transgressed the command of God herself, she also induced Adam to eat. This disobedience brought great misery upon our first parents; they immediately lost the love, favor and friendship of God, and the inheritance of heaven; they became weak and mortal, slaves of Satan, and rendered themselves guilty of the punishment of eternal damnation.

(£.) By disobedience we incur the same fate; he who does not subject himself to God, who violates his holy commandments, renders himself miserable for time and eternity. God demands of us, as of our first parents, an obedience that is connected with no hard sacrifices. It is true, Christ calls his commandments a yoke and a burden, but a sweet yoke and a light burden, and he promises to those who take this yoke and burden upon themselves rest for their souls,—*Matt,* ii: 29, 30. Whilst those who suffer themselves to be governed by their passions prepare for themselves great misery even in this life, the faithful servants of God enjoy the sweetest peace; therefore David says: "Much peace have they that love thy law."—*Ps.* 118: 165.

2. *Mary, by her obedience, repaired the sin of Eve.*

(a.) As soon as Mary was convinced that it was the will of God that she should conceive and bring forth Jesus Christ, the Son of God, she gave her consent to the proposal, and said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.* Do not tell me that is was easy for Mary to obey, because God required nothing but what could only be most desirable to her, for a greater grace could not be conferred on her than to become the Mother of God. It is true, that the grace which was imparted to her by the divine Maternity was great, but the burden, which as Mother of God she had to take upon herself, was also great. We may rest assured that she knew and clearly understood by divine inspiration all the sufferings and tribulations which were in store for her as Mother of God. She said to herself: If I become the Mother of God, all the happiness of my life is gone; I must be a Mother of Sorrows to my last breath; trials will come upon me, which will plunge me into a sea of sufferings. Mary, therefore, by giving her consent in these words: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me me according to thy word,* performed a most heroic act of obedience; and she performed it for the love of God, whose will was to her above all, and also for the

love of man, because our salvation depended upon her obedience. It is sad to consider what would have been our condition if Mary had not yielded this ready compliance to the will of God.

(Æ) You also must subject yourselves always to the will of God, and be obedient. He requires nothing of you but what is possible with the assistance of his grace. Love God sincerely ; if you love him you will yield him a ready obedience. As the blacksmith can hammer glowing iron into any shape and form, so man, penetrated by the love of God, is ready to do anything that God requires of him. For the love of God obey also your superiors, especially your priests and confessors ; they are the reprentatives of God upon earth, and it is his holy will that you do what they prescribe. Obedience is the summary of Christian perfection. No means is less laborious, none less dangerous, none shorter and surer for enriching oneself with all virtues, and for attaining the object of our desire, eternal life. Obedience is better than sacrifice.

PERORATION.

Take Mary for your model. Imitate her in the virtues of faith, humility and obedience, by which she repaired Eve's sins of unbelief, pride and disobedience. Stand firm in the faith, remembering the words of Christ: "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved : but he that believeth not, shall be condemned." —*Mark* 16: 16. Preserve *humility,* for it is the foundation of all virtue and of a life pleasing to God. Practice *obedience,* and do what God and his representatives, your temporal and spiritual authorities, command you. Through faith, humility and obedience Mary became the Mother of God, and the cause of our joy; through these three virtues you also will become children of God and heirs of heaven. Amen.

THIRD SKETCH.

MARY, FULL OF GRACE FOR HERSELF AND FOR US,

Hail, full of grace.—Luke 1: 28.

Of all the eulogies pronounced upon the Blessed Virgin Mary, even during her earthly life, there is not one greater and more significant than that with which God himself saluted her on

this day, by the mouth of the Archangel Grabriel: *Hail, full of grace.* On account of the incomparable dignity of her divine Maternity Mary received a plenitude of grace; her soul resembles a vessel filled to its utmost capacity with a precious fluid. She enjoys more graces than all the angels and saints: she possesses in an eminent degree faith, hope, charity, humility, chastity, obedience and all other virtues; her memory is full of holy thoughts, her understanding highly enlightened, her will zealous, animated by the most ardent love of God. "Mary in the first moment of her conception received more prerogatives and graces than the souls of all the saints, in fact, even more than all the choirs of angels, because she was more loved by God than all the saints and angelic spirits."—*Suarez.* And why should she not have received a far greater measure of grace than all the angels and saints, since these were only servants of God, whilst we venerate Mary as the Mother of God? We shall to-day place Mary before our eyes, and call to mind that she is full of grace—

I. For herself, and
II. For us.

Part I.

Mary is full of grace for herself, because she received the fulness of all grace; therefore the angel salutes her with the words: *Hail, full of grace.* In considering grace we distinguish four kinds: *Uncreated grace, sanctifying grace, the grace bestowed gratuitously,* and *the grace of assistance.* Mary possessed these four kinds of grace in the fullest measure.

i. *Uncreated grace.* By this we understand God himself, who dwells in the soul of the just man, as Christ himself says: "If any man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him."—*John* 14: 23. The Apostle also says: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?"—*I Cor.* 3:16. Mary possessed this grace in a wonderful manner, because the Son of God, true God, assumed human flesh of her through the power of the Holy Ghost and dwelt nine months in her womb. This is the great and important day on which the only-begotten Son of God became man in her and remained within her until Christmas, the feast of his blessed Nativity. To this uncreated grace which Mary received on this day St. Ambrose refers, when he says: "It is with justice that Mary alone is called full of grace, because she was the only one who obtained the grace, which no other creature had merited, to be filled with the author of all grace, God himself." This un-

created grace is imparted to us in a similar manner; for faith teaches that in holy communion we truly and really receive Jesus Christ, with his divinity and humanity. In a certain sense we are more favored than the Blessed Mother of God, for whilst she received Jesus Christ, the Son of God, only once, when he became nan, we can receive him in the Most Holy Sacrament as often as our devotion prompts us. What a happiness, what a blessing! Oh, that you would often become participants of this grace. Oh, do not imitate those lukewarm Catholics who approach the altar only once a year, and even then more from compulsion than from free choice or an interior impulse. On, that you would frequently, or as often as possible, or as often as your father confessor finds it expedient, approach the holy altar and receive Jesus, the author and dispenser of all graces.

2. *Sanctifying grace*, which sanctifies man, making him a child of God and an heir of heaven. Man receives this grace first **in** the Sacrament of Baptism; if he lose it he can recover it in the Sacrament of Penance. Mary obtained this sanctifying grace in the very first instant of her conception. She remained, as faith teaches, perfectly free from original sin, and was always holy, a child of grace. But she received sanctifying grace in a more abundant measure than all other human beings, in fact, than all the angels of heaven; her soul was, as it were, replete with this grace. Hence St. Jerome says: "This grace was imparted to other creatures, as it were, in drops, but the plenitude of grace was infused into Mary. As Mary has been exalted above angels and men on account of her dignity as Mother of God, it was but proper that the Lord should communicate to her a greater measure of grace than to men and angels." Thus Mary as a child, indeed even in the very first instant of her life, excelled the saints and angels in holiness, and during her life sanctifying grace was increased within her in a measure far exceeding that attained by any saint. There was not a day, nor an hour, no, not even **a** minute, in which she did not gain merit. If her hands were resting and her mouth did not utter the praises of God, her heart was nevertheless active, for she unceasingly made acts of faith, hope, humility, obedience and love. Thus sanctifying grace was increased in her to an almost infinite degree, so that it resembles the sea, whose waters, although they are not immeasurable, cannot be measured. Sanctifying grace is the most precious treasure to be found on earth. If we possess it, God loves us, regards us as his children, and promises us heaven with its eternal joys for our inheritance. What can be imagined more glorious? In order to merit sanctifying grace for us Christ shed his blood on the cross. Recognize in the price he paid the value of the grace. What are we if we do not possess sanctifying grace?

Children of wrath, slaves of Satan, enemies of God and a prey to hell. Can a greater evil be imagined than to be deprived of sanctifying grace? Faith teaches that sanctifying grace is lost by every mortal sin. What then is there that we should shun so much as mortal sin? We should forfeit the good opinion of our fellow-men, lose honor and good name, house, home, our entire substance, health, even life itself—rather than commit a mortal sin. You must also endeavor to increase sanctifying grace; practice Christian virtues, conscientiously fulfil the duties of religion and of your state of life, often receive the sacraments, do and suffer everything for God's sake; these are means by which sanctifying grace is increased,

3. The *grace bestowed gratuitously,* by which we understand that grace which is given to us, not so much for our own salvation as for the benefit of our fellow-men. To this belong the gifts of miracles, of prophecy, and of tongues. The Apostles received these gifts on Whit-Sunday, and many other saints, especially missionaries, have received them, and still receive them for the conversion of infidels. Mary likewise received these gifts in all their fulness. An evident proof of this, not to mention other things, is the numerous miracles which God has wrought by the intercession of Mary throughout the whole world, during the last nineteen hundred years and more. What saint or angel, according to Church history, has wrought so many miracles as the Blessed Virgin? Through her more miracles have probably been wrought than through all the angels and saints together. God does not impart these extraordinary gifts of grace to all men, but only to those who need them for the promotion of his glory and the salvation of souls. We who do not need such gifts must not ask them of God, as they might become injurious to us did we possess them. Thus a certain Franciscan friar, named Justin, whom God had favored with extraordinary graces, especially with the gift of prayer, so that he was often raised from the earth in his devotions, was led astray by pride, thought himself better than his brethren, would not hear of obedience, left the Order, committed great crimes in the world and died an impenitent sinner. Let us not desire gifts which in our imperfection might lead us astray, but let us ask God for those graces only which we need for the salvation of our souls.

4. *Finally, the grace of assistance,* by which God enlightens our understanding and moves our will to avoid evil and to will and perform that which is good. There is no doubt that God imparted this grace to the Blessed Virgin in a more abundant measure than to all other human beings. As Mother of God she was to surpass the saints in holiness and merits; she was to be the queen

of angels and saints, for which an extraordinary measure of grace was needed. Mary was never to commit the least venial sin during her whole life, she was to preserve to her last breath the first grace imparted to her; for this end she needed extraordinary graces, because with ordinary ones it is impossible to avoid venial sins throughout one's whole life. Mary most zealously employed every grace she received for the honor and glory of God and her own salvation; now it is certain that God communicates his graces the more abundantly the better we employ them. From this it is evident that Mary received far more and far greater graces than all other men. God also gives us as many graces as we need to work out our salvation. He wills the salvation of all men; but because this is not possible without the assistance of his grace, it follows that he gives all the graces necessary for salvation. But that grace may be for our salvation we must diligently co-operate with it, for he who has created us without our assistance will not save us without our co-operation. Consider that you must give an account of every grace which you receive. This will be a difficult task. Avail yourself of the graces which are given you to preserve you from sin, to extirpate evil inclinations, to fulfil your duties, to progress in virtue and to acquire merits for heaven. Pray daily to God to give you the grace of persevering in his love and friendship to the end of your life, thus saving your souls.

Part II.

Mary is also full of grace for us. St. Thomas of Aquin says: "Mary is full of grace not only for herself but also for all men." We must, therefore, have recourse to her in all our necessities with the greatest confidence.

i. *In all temporal concerns.* The history of all Christian times testifies that through Mary's intercession evils of every kind have been averted, storms calmed, sicknesses healed, hostile armies conquered and whole empires saved. A multitude of churches, chapels, and sanctuaries in cities and villages, are monuments of special favors obtained through the mediation of Mary, of renowned miracles wrought by the invocation of her name. And many of the feasts which we celebrate during the course of the year, are they not solemn testimonies of the gratitude of the Catholic world towards the Queen of Heaven for the frequent rescue of Christendom from the invasion of barbarous nations, schisms, internal wars and other evils? Therefore we call her in the Litany, Help of Christians, Health of the sick, and Comforter of the afflicted, expressions which clearly indicate that Mary procures for us help in our various necessities. Who could recount the

miraculous cures of the most malignant evils and diseases which have been effected by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin? Who does not know that St. Adalbert, bishop of Prague, St. Nicholas Tolentine, St. Philip Neri, and numerous other saints call her their saviour in the worst sicknesses? If we repair to her holy shrines we shall find a multitude of votive tablets and pictures, which testify to the wonderful cures effected through Mary's intercession. How many afflicted with various bodily infirmities and evils, how many lame, blind and sick of various diseases have obtained their health in a miraculous manner at these holy shrines (Lourdes in France, Loretto in Italy)? Since Mary is so powerful and renders us such ready assistance in all corporal necessities, let us have recourse to her with confidence, for, as St. Bonaventure says, when no human power can help us Mary comes to our assistance, and will certainly exercise her influence, help and protection if what we desire be conducive to the salvation of our souls.

2. *In spiritual concerns.*

(a.) She obtains the grace of conversion for sinners. As we read in the history of the creation *{Gen.* i : 16): "God made two great lights : a greater light to rule the day, and a lesser light to rule the night." In the spiritual sense the holy Fathers understand by the greater light, the sun, Jesus Christ, whose light the just enjoy, who walk in the light of grace; by the lesser light, the moon, they understand Mary, because sinners who walk in the darkness of sin are enlightened by her. Pope Innocent III. asks: "What then must the sinner do?" And he answers: "Having lost grace, and being therefore deprived of the light of the sun, let him turn to the moon, let him invoke Mary; she will surely enlighten him that he may know his miserable condition, and will obtain for him strength to forsake his evil ways." In the Old Law there were certain cities of refuge, in which criminals who fled thither were protected against the fury of the avenger. A similar place of refuge the sinner has in Mary; therefore St. John Damascene calls her the refuge of all who fly to her. St. Methodius assures us that numerous sinners are continually converted through the intercession of Mary. Another spiritual writer says; "Mary rejects no sinner who has recourse to her, no matter how deeply he may be buried in vice. She reconciles to her Son all who ask her intercession, and obtains pardon for them." If you should have the misfortune to fall into a grievous sin, immediately have recourse to Mary and cease not to besiege her with prayers and sighs until she has obtained forgiveness for you. Be on your guard afterwards against any relapse, and as fervent penitents work out your salvation.

(3.) *She assists us in temptation.* How powerful the Blessed Virgin is over Satan, the holy Scripture testifies. Therein God says to the serpent, which is the devil: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head."—*Gen.* 3: 15. Mary, the Blessed Mother of God, is continually crushing his head, frustrating all the designs of the devil and his associates to captivate souls by sin and to plunge them into perdition. Instead of capturing men he is captured by this powerful Queen, and like a chained slave must obey the commands of the Blessed A'irgin. We read in the Old Testament that God conducted the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Land of Promise by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. In this wonderful pillar the Fathers again recognize a type of Mary; they consider that it symbolizes the two offices of Mary which she continually exercises for our salvation; for she shields us like a cloud from the fire of divine justice, and like a fire from the power of the devil. Therefore the holy Fathers and spiritual writers exhort us to have recourse to Mary in all temptations. 'Œf the wind of temptation assail you, if you run upon the rocks of adversity, lift up your eyes toward that star—invoke the Blessed Virgin. In dangers, in extremities, in matters of doubt, think of the Blessed Virgin; let her not depart from your mouth, nor from your heart, and that you may obtain the assistance of her intercession, fail not to follow her example."—*St. Bern.* In all temptations have recourse to the powerful Virgin and Mother of God, invoke her name with confidence, and you also will experience how powerful Mary is, and how much hell and its associates tremble at the mention of her name.

(f.) *She comes to our assistance in the hour of death* The most important of hours is the hour of death; it may be that we shall then be engaged in a most vehement struggle. At such a time the words of Holy Writ are applicable: "The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." In this important hour the devil will not be satisfied to tempt us by himself alone, he will also call his associates to his assistance, in order with increased power to attack and ruin the soul. In our dying hour we need extraordinary assistance, and Mary will afford it to us. We daily pray to her for it when we say: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death." Oh! how many clients of Mary have already experienced the powerful assistance of the Queen of heaven in the hour of death. Many would have despaired, if Mary had not come to their assistance. St. Vincent Ferrer says: "The exalted queen of heaven receives the souls of her faithful servants under her mantle; she accompanies them to the judgment-seat of her Son and becomes their advocate." If we fer-

vently venerate Mary we may hope to experience her powerful help at our death. She will raise us up, console, comfort and strengthen us, that we may overcome the temptations and suggestions of the evil spirit, and depart this life in peace. "This good Mother," says St. Alphonsus Liguori, "does not forsake her faithful servants in their sufferings, and above all in the struggle of death, when the greatest sufferings that we have to endure upon earth come upon us; for since Mary wishes to be our life so long as we are in exile upon earth, so will she be our sweetness in the hour of our death, obtaining for us a sweet and holy end."

PERORATION.

Thus Mary is full of grace both for herself and for us. She is full of grace for herself, for God in view of her exalted dignity has communicated to her a greater measure of grace than to all the angels and saints. Let us therefore venerate her more than all the angels and saints. Let us celebrate her feasts with a holy joy, let us daily say some prayer in her honor, especially the *Angelus*, three times a day, and the Rosary on Saturday. Mary is also full of grace for us; she is our powerful and merciful mother, always inclined to assist us in corporal and spiritual necessities. Let us, therefore, place our confidence in Mary and never fail to commend ourselves daily to her maternal protection. I conclude with the prayer of the Church: "Holy Mary, succor the miserable, help the weak-hearted, comfort the mournful, pray for the people, intercede for the clergy, pray for the devout female sex, and let all experience thy intercession who celebrate the feast of thy Annunciation." Amen.

ASCENSION DAY.

Lesson.—*Acts.* i: i-n. The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, of all things which Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day on which, giving commandments by the Holy Ghost to the Apostles whom he had chosen, he was taken up: to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion, by many proofs; for forty days appearing to them, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And eating together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard (saith he) by my mouth. For John indeed baptized with water: but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence. They, therefore, who were come together, asked him, saying: Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? But he said to them: It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in his own power, but you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth. And when he had said these things, while they looked on, he was raised up and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were beholding him going up to heaven, behold, two men stood by them in white garments, who also said: Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven.

Gospel.—*Mark* 16: 14-20. At that time: As the eleven were attable, Jesus appeared to them: and he upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart; because they did not believe them who had seen him after he was risen again. And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues: they shall take

up serpents: and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. And the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God. But they, going forth, preached everywhere; the Lord working withal and confirming the word with signs that followed.

FIRST SKETCH.

THE WAY TO HEAVEN IS NARROW AND STEEP.

And the Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven.—Mark **16: 19.**

Many of you have undoubtedly seen the picture which repre-■ents the path to heaven and the road to hell. The way to hell s a broad thoroughfare, gently descending, strewed with fragant flowers; the people who travel on it are in high spirits, singing laughing, jesting and dancing; they hurry onward. This road, however, leads into the jaws of a terrible dragon who devours these merry travelers as soon as they approach him. The other path is narow and steep, leading over rocks, briars and thorns. The travelers on it are bent down, loaded with a heavy cross, drops of perspiration trickle from their faces, their bare feet leave footprints of blood behind them, for the journey is very arduous. But above, on the summit of the mountain, is the new Jerusalem, built of precious stones, brilliant with light and beauty, redolent with sweet odors, and from it is heard the sound of heavenly music. The happy travelers enter this glorious city, and there enjoy unspeakable bliss for all eternity. Which way will you go? . . . Jesus Christ, whose Ascension we celebrate to-day, during his entire earthly life trod this hard path strewed with briars and thorns from the crib to the cross. But now his journey is at an end; he has entered into his glory. Oh, let us follow him in life, that we may be able to follow him after our departure from this world. With this intention we shall consider to-day the path to heaven and make the resolution to walk thereon with constancy and perseverance. This path, however, is—

I. Narrow, and
II. Steep.

Part I.

That the way to heaven is narrow Christ himself has assured us in these woi'dj. 'How strait is the way that leadeth to life."

—*Matth.* 7:14. But why is this way so strait or narrow? Chiefly for two reasons:

1. Because few only walk thereon. Roads are more used than footpaths. Since the road to hell is a broad thoroughfare, and a very pleasant and convenient one, a great many more people travel thereon than on the rugged footpath that leads to heaven. For this reason our Lord adds to the words, "how strait is the way that leadeth to life," "and few there are that find it!"—*Matt. 7:* 14. He also expresses this in his remark that "many are called, but few chosen."—*Matt.* 20: 16. About eighty thousand people die every day. How many of them go to heaven? Forty thousand? No; this would be half; but Christ says, "few." Perhaps twenty or thirty thousand? This would be *many,* whereas Christ says, "/m" Five or ten thousand? No; for this would still be many, and Christ says, "few." AVhen we say few, a few out of eighty thousand, we must understand between two and three thousand, and perhaps not so many. Of the eighty thousand that die daily, perhaps only two or three thousand are saved and go to heaven; all the others perish eternally. "How strait is the way that leadeth to life!" Why are so many excluded from heaven and condemned to hell?

(λ.) *Because through their own fault they have not the Catholic faith.* Our Blessed Lord emphatically says: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned."—*Marktà·.* 16. How great is the number of those who perish because they have not faith! Of these are a countless multitude of pagans, Mahometans, Jews and Christian sects, for it is certain that most of these unbelievers and heretics would come to the knowledge of the Catholic faith, if they desired to do so, and would sincerely inquire into it, and if they would avail themselves of the proffered graces for their salvation. For want of faith even many Catholics will be lost, because they are only nominal, not practical Catholics, and because they reject some doctrines of the Catholic Church, especially such as oppose their inclinations and passions. Remember, he who rejects even one doctrine proposed to our faith by the Church, *e. g.,* the Immaculate Conception, or the Infallibility of the Pope, will certainly be lost, even though he should lead a good life.

{bl) Because they do not live according to theirfaith. Faith alone will not save us. St. James (2: 17, 19) says: "Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself..... the devils also believe, and tremble." And St. Paul says: "And if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."—*I. Cor.* 13: 2. Further, our Lord himself says: "Not every one

that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt, 7:* 21. How many will burn in hell who have believed but have not lived as Catholics! Alas! how many Catholics there are who violate the commandments of God and of his Church, who transgress one or other precept in an important matter and sin grievously! How great is the number of those Catholics who commit one or more of the seven deadly sins, of the six sins against the Holy Ghost, and of the four sins crying to heaven for vengeance, or of the sins by which one becomes accessory to those of others! And who can number the Catholics who grievously violate the duties of their religion and state of life, who make no use of the means of grace ordained by Christ, or abuse them to their greater perdition. Is it not then evident that the majority of Catholics are lost? Examine into your own condition, whether you believe everything which the Catholic Church teaches, whether you live according to the requirements of the Catholic faith, whether you walk on the strait path that leads to heaven.

2. Because it requires great mortification and self-denial to walk thereon. He who wishes to be a disciple of Christ and to be saved, must deny himself and mortify all inordinate inclinations and passions; for Christ says: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." —*Matt.* 16: 24. And again: "If thy hand, or thy foot, scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee having one eye to enter into life, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire." —*Matt.* 18; 8, 9. Therefore, if something were as dear to you as an eye, a hand or a foot, and if parting with it, as, *6. g.,* the separation from a certain person, the eradication of an evil habit, would be as painful as the plucking out of an eye, or the amputation of a hand or a foot, we should be obliged to make the sacrifice, because upon it would depend our eternal salvation. The saints reflected well upon this; hence we find none who did not follow Christ on the strait road of mortification and self-denial. They all could say with St. Paul: "Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus; that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies."—***II*** *Cor.* 4: 10. We, also, must mortify ourselves if we wish to serve God and secure our salvation. Interior mortification, that is, the curbing of inordinate inclinations and passions, is chiefly necessary, because without it we can neither avoid evil nor do good. How is it that many ?urse and blaspheme, are unjust in their business transactions,

contaminate themselves with the abominable vice of impurity, neglect prayer, fail to hear the word of God and to receive the sacraments? Because they do not combat and suppress anger, covetousness, lust, sloth, etc. The same may be said of other passions; if they are not bridled, they become unmanageable and plunge one into vices and sins. Exterior mortification is also necessary if we wish to lead a pious life. If we yield too much to our sensual nature, it draws us from good and entices us to sin. How many there may be among us who through tepidity and love of ease neglect the duties of our religion and state of life! How many must confess that they have often and grievously ofiended God because they did not bridle their senses, the eyes, the ears, the tongue! Because the path to heaven is strait, we must do violence to ourselves, must deny and mortify ourselves.

The path to heaven is steep, for the heavenly Jerusalem is situated on a high mountain.

i. *We must therefore lift up our eyes.* The Apostle intimates this when he says: "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth." *Col.* 3: 1, 2. The priest at holy mass daily invites the faithful to this, saying to them; *Sursum corda.* Heaven can be obtained only at the cost of much labor and pain, for Christsays: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; and the violent bear it away?'—*Matt.* 11: 12. We must, therefore, look upwards, *i. e.,* have an earnest desire fox heaven; we seldom labor or make any sacrifice for that which we do not earnestly desire. Daily experience proves this. How do those live whose thoughts are bent upon earthly things, who would gladly renounce heaven if they could always remain on earth? Do they comply with their religious duties? Are they zealous in the service of God? Ah, no; they violate the commandments of God, are slothful in the practice of Christian virtues and good works, and burden their conscience with many sins. We need not therefore wonder that in our times virtue and the fear of God decrease, while infidelity, forgetfulness of God and vices of every kind increase and spread far and wide. The greater number know only temporal interests, how to make money, how to promote business and to lead an easy life; this is the object towards which all steer under full sail. The natural result is that they die to God and virtue and are Catholics only in name. Raise your hearts and eyes upwards, live as pilgrims who have no lasting city here, but seek one to come, and so pass through the temporal as not to lose the eternal.

2. *We must frequently stop at inns to recruit our strength.* **A** way which always ascends and leads over high mountains exhausts one's strength; one is glad therefore to find inns on the road, where one can rest and obtain refreshment. In a similar way resting-places are also desirable on the steep path to heaven. Which are these resting-places ? I shall mention only three.

(a.) *The resting-place called "The Golden Key."* This place of rest is *prayer*, for prayer indeed is a golden key, it unlocks the heart of God, from which flow all graces and blessings. He who prays with humility, confidence, fervor and perseverance, is invincible, for God assists him in every temptation, and if God be with us, who can resist us? St. Bernard says; "The power of hell is indeed very great, but prayer is more powerful than all the devils in hell, because by prayer the soul obtains the assistance of God, which surpasses by far all created power." By prayer we obtain light to know the will of God, and courage and strength to fulfil it. Prayer kindles the fire of divine love in our hearts, causing us to detach ourselves from all inordinate inclinations and to give ourselves wholly and unreservedly to God. Hence St. Bonaventure says : "If you wish to fill your heart with holy thoughts and desires, with fervor and devotion, apply yourself to prayer. If you wish to extirpate vice and to enrich yourself with virtue, devote yourself to prayer. If you wish to ascend to the height of contemplation and to enjoy the embrace of the divine bridegroom, devote yourself to prayer." Be fervent in prayer, that you may participate in the fruits thereof.

(b.) The resting-place called "The two-edged Sword." This is the word of God, which the Apostle compares to a two-edged sword penetrating and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow. Nothing is so conducive to a pious Christian life, replete with good works, as fervor in hearing the word of God. Experience proves this. Those who listen attentively to the word of God on Sundays and holidays and read spiritual books, with very few exceptions lead a pious life. On the contrary, those who are content with hearing a low mass on Sundays, and scarcely ever listen to a sermon, generally do not live up to the rules and regulations of the Church; they adopt the false maxims of the world, give full scope to their passions and are in danger of losing their faith. Do not imitate these lukewarm Catholics, but listen to the word of God, which is preached to you on Sundays and holidays, and read spiritual books.

(c.) *Finally, the resting-place called "The Pelican."* **It is said of the pelican, that she wounds herself in order to nourish her young**

with her own blood. Christ has done this. He shed his blood to preserve us from eternal death and to acquire for us a life of grace and glory. This vivifying and sanctifying blood of Christ flows to us through the holy sacraments, especially the Sacraments of Penance and of the Blessed Eucharist; these we should often receive in order to become partakers of the fruits of redemption. The Sacrament of Penance has two particular effects, it both frees and preserves us from sin. This much is certain, that thousands of Catholics do not fall into mortal sin chiefly because they go frequently to confession. But immensely more blessed are the effects of holy communion, for as often as we re eive it we receive not only graces but Jesus Christ himselt, the fountain of all grace. St. Bernard says: "The body of the Lord is medicine for the sick, a guide for the pilgrim, strength for the weak, the joy of those in health, and the healing af the wounded. Through it the Christian becomes humbler when chastised, more patient at labor, more ready for obedience, more watchful over self, more fervent in love, and more devout at prayer." Let him who sincerely wishes to remain free from sin, to perfect himself more and more and to persevere in grace to the end, follow the example of the saints in frequently receiving the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.

PERORATION.

Therefore, make the resolution to day to follow the narrow and steep path that leads to heaven. *Walk on the narrow path.* Do not follow the crowd who travel on the broad road, but associate yourself with the small number of those who follow their divine Saviour on the narrow way of the cross. Remember that you will advance only in proportion as you mortify yourself, and that without continual mortification you cannot attain your final destiny. *Walk on the steep path.* Look upwards, strive for that which will be of value hereafter, and practice virtues and good works, for they alone will open for you the portals of heaven. Behold your Saviour, who now sits at the right hand of God; follow his steps to the end of your earthly pilgrimage, that in you his words may be fulfilled: "I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again, and will take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be."—*John* 14: 2, 3. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH

HE WHO EARNESTLY DESIRES IT WILL OBTAIN HEAVEN.

And the Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God.—Matt. 16: 19.

This is the day on which Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. The portals of heaven, which had been barred against mankind, are now open and it is the will of God that all men enter. What, then, must we do to reach heaven? A sister of St. Thomas of Aquin, being very solicitous for her salvation, one day asked her brother the following question: "Dear brother, what must I do to go to heaven?" "My sister," replied the saint, "if you wish to get to heaven, you must will it." If this answer of the renowned Doctor of the Church is correct, nothing is easier than to reach heaven; we need only desire it. Many desire various things in the world, such as health, riches, honor and dignities, but generally their wishes are not realized. The case is different in regard to heaven, for every one who wishes obtains this greatest of all blessings. No one has ever been condemned to hell who wished to go to heaven; for he who earnestly desires his salvation will obtain **it. This desire, however,** It ust be—

I. Earnest, and
IL Lasting.

Part L

He who wishes to go to heaven, must will it earnestly, *i. e.f* he nust—

I. *Have a desirefor heaven.*

(ai) When the Apostles saw with what glory their Lord ascended into heaven they were struck with amazement; standing on Mount Olivet, forgetting everything around them, they had no other wish than to be united with their Lord and Master in heaven. Therefore the angels said to them: *Ye men of Galilee, why standyou looking up to heaven?—Acts* 1: 11. If we consider the ineffable glory of our Redeemer in heaven, and reflect that we also are one day to reign with him there, to what else should our desire be directed but to the eternal goods of heaven? For this reason the Apostle says: "Seek the things that are above; where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God."—*Col.* 3:1.

(b.) But have all men a sincere desire for heaven? Ah! no, there are many in our days who will not hear of it. If the priest speaks of heaven, giving reasons why we should hope for it, they laugh and even say: "Heaven! our heaven is on earth." Who are these? They are infidels who think that all ends with this earthly life, who deny the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body and eternity. Such infidels are very numerous in our days. Again, there are many who still possess a remnant of faith, but who, nevertheless, have no desire for heaven, because their life is one of worldliness and sin. They are only intent upon honor and dignity, wealth, joys, pleasures, and carnal lusts; for anything higher and nobler they have no appreciation, no desire. It is evident that such men do not go to heaven, for having no desire for it, they do nothing to obtain it; the natural result is that they remain excluded from heaven.

2. *Overcome all obstacles.*

(λ.) He who earnestly wishes a thing is not deterred by any obstacles; and the more desirable that object is to him, the more he exerts himself to obtain possession of it. With him it is only a question of time. Now heaven is the most precious and desirable of all goods. What did Jesus Christ do in order to merit heaven for himself and for us? He, the only-begotten of the Father, appeared on earth in the form of a servant, led a life of poverty for thirty-three years, endured countless persecutions and sufferings, and, finally, died a most painful and ignominious death on the cross. What did the saints do to attain heaven? They fought with courage and perseverance against temptations, magnanimously renounced the pleasures of the world, unceasingly mortified themselves, sacrificed property and life, even their hearts' blood, when it was a question of saving their souls. Adrian, a young soldier only eighteen years of age, witnessing the invincible constancy of the martyrs under the most cruel tortures, asked some of them what benefit they hoped to derive from so many and such terrible tortures. ‹fWe hope," they replied, "for a benefit such as surpasses the conception of man. This gives us courage and enables us to endure the greatest sufferings not only with patience, but with pleasure and joy. This hope sweetens the bitterness of all our tortures so much that we would cheerfully sacrifice a thousand lives, if we had them. The evils which we bear are transitory, but the felicity which we expect will never end." Adrian was so moved by this answer that he immediately asked for baptism and shortly after died a martyr.

(i.) If we earnestly and sincerely wish to get to heaven, we must make every sacrifice. For example, a person lives in en-

mity with his neighbor; whenever he thinks of him his blood boils, he speaks of, and treats him with, aversion, avoids his company and refuses to speak to him when they meet. Another has sinful relations with a person of the opposite sex. Again, another is in possession of goods unjustly acquired which it is difficult for him to restore. Some are addicted to anger and give vent to curses and blasphemies on every occasion. Others are intemperate. Now, if such, and all habitual sinners, sincerely and earnestly wish to go to heaven, they will surmount all obstacles in the way of their salvation, no matter how much labor and pain it may cost them; they will pluck out the eye, cut off the hand or the foot, and say to themselves: "It is better for me with one eye, maimed and lame, to enter into life, than with two eyes, two hands and feet to be cast into hell-fire." He that is not prepared to make every, even the greatest, sacrifice for his soul has not an earnest will to get to heaven and for that reason will not be saved. Examine how matters stand with you.

3. *He must make diligent use of the means of salvation.* This is self-evident; for if we earnestly wish a certain thing we shall surely employ the means necessary for obtaining it. For example: A sick man who desires to recover his health, a poor man who longs to better his circumstances, one who wishes to obtain a situation, or secure an office. What are the means we must employ in order to gain heaven? I will mention only three:

(ad) Prayer. The *sinner* who desires to be converted must pray. So long as he does not pray it is a sure sign that his heart is far from God and that he lacks the will to be converted. He must pray, because without grace he cannot be converted; for although God gives gratuitously the first grace requisite for salvation, the subsequent graces, which are necessary for the accomplishment of repentance and conversion, depend on prayer. He therefore who earnestly wishes to be converted from his evil ways and to go to heaven, must pray. Examples prove that all sinners who were converted prayed. David *(II. Kings 12:* 13); the thief on the cross *(Ltike* 23 : 42); St. Paul.—*Acts* 9: 11. The *just man* must pray ; for without continual, fervent prayer he will not be able to overcome temptation and persevere in righteousness to the end. Hence St. Chrysostom says: "As plants need moisture in order to remain fresh and to prevent them from withering and dying, so we need prayer in order to be saved." And again: "As the body obtains its life from the soul, so the soul obtains her life from prayer."

(bi) The word of God. Our Blessed Lord says: "He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not,

because you are not of God/'—*John 8:* 47. Although it is not the mere hearing, but the observance of the word of God that leads to life, this much is certain, that those who disdain the word of God and refuse to hear it have no love of God and no zeal, and therefore cannot be saved. It is a sign of good health to have a good appetite, but he who feels a disgust for food is ill, and the nearer death approaches the greater and more lasting is the disgust. The same is true in regard to the word of God which is our spiritual food. The greater our hunger for this heavenly bread, the healthier is our soul; but he who will not hear the word of God, who maliciously absents and withdraws himself from it, is spiritually ill, is far from God, because he will not hear of him, and if he perseveres in this aversion his perdition is unavoidable.

(c.) *The reception of the holy Sacraments of Penance and of the Blessed Eucharist.* In order to get to heaven we must have a pure and undefiled heart and must persevere in the state of grace. The sacraments effect both if we receive them frequently with hearts well prepared; they purify us from sin, strengthen us in good, enable us to overcome ail temptations and to persevere in the service of God. Examine yourselves and see what use you make of these means of grace? Do you deligently practice prayer? Do you like to listen to catechetical instructions and sermons? Do you like to read spiritual books? Do you often during the year go to confession and communion, and are you always well prepared? Blessed are you, if such be the case; you have the surest hope that heaven will be your inheritance. But should you do the contrary, you have no hope of being saved. Reflect well on this, and if hitherto you have been negligent in employing the means of grace, begin from this day to be more zealous, that it may be said of you that it is your earnest will to get to heaven.

Part II.

This will must be lasting, persevering. If we wish to go abroad, for instance, to Europe, to Mexico, or to Asia, so long as we are on the voyage we must desire to reach the desired port. Should we change our mind, the result would be that we never should arrive at our destination. In like manner our desire to reach heaven must be persevering, for should we change our mind and consequently wander from the path leading to heaven, we should evidently not arrive at our destination. He, therefore, who wishes to obtain heaven must continually desire it—that is, he must desire it—

i. *At every period of his life.*

(a.) *In youth.* They say, youth is not virtuous, young people must sow their wild oats; later, when the years of thoughtlessness are past they will improve. This is very foolish talk, and quite opposed to the word of God, history and experience. The Holy Ghost assures us, that "a young man according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it."—*Prov. 22:* 6. Sacred history informs us, that Cain, Cham, and Absalom, who were wicked in their youth, did not reform in more advanced years. And does not experience prove that only a few of those who were worthless in their youth, were ever really converted in their later years? With truth and justice we may cry out to the young man who yields himself to vices and excesses of all kinds: "Unfortunate man, look before you leap, you are standing on the brink of hell. I fear that you will lose your soul." And how great is the number of young people in these days for whom we must fear this in view of the spread of infidelity?

(z5.) *In mature age.* At this time of life a man sets up a home for himself; he gets married, is blessed with children, his calling requires him to devote his whole attention to his business and to mix a great deal with the world. It frequently happens that in the midst of the earthly cares and distractions of this life he neglects his salvation, fulfils his religious duties indifferently and burdens his conscience with various sins. Add to this that many carry the sins of their youth into manhood, and therefore, unless they do violence to themselves, even then lead a life estranged from God. How necessary therefore is it that in mature age you should keep your attention continually fixed upon your final destiny. If you always walk in the tear of God you will so conduct yourselves in your business transactions and in your intercourse with the world as to be able to pass from this world in peace and tranquillity.

(r.) *In old age.* At this time of life our days are numbered, eternity approaches with giant steps and we stand with one foot already in the grave. Ah, how deplorable is the condition of those who even at the close of their life are attached to the world and its vanities, more solicitous for everything else than for heaven! How deplorable their situation when they neglect to set their conscience in order, and fear not to appear before the judgment-seat of God without any serious preparation. You must therefore throughout life, in youth, in maturer years, and in old age, bear this one thought in mind: I wish to go to heaven; thus you will sanctify your whole life and live as it is necessary to live in order to work out your salvation.

2. In every circumstance of life.

(a.) The saints were placed in various circumstances, but they always had God and their eternal salvation in view, and served their Lord with unchangeable fidelity in every situation of life. Consider Job. He was at one time of his life rich, respected, and what the world calls happy, but he was not proud or overbearing in the days of his prosperity. Afterwards he became poor and God subjected him to the severest trial. He lost all that he possessed; we behold him covered with ulcers, tormented by pains, sitting on a dung-hill, lamenting the loss of his prosperity. But in all his troubles one virtue he never lost, one duty he never forgot; he continued to trust in God as in the days of his prosperity and with resignation he exclaimed: "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Consider also Joseph of Egypt. He had vicious brothers who committed wicked deeds, but he avoided their company and preserved his innocence; Putiphar's wife assailed his chastity, he resisted her and preferred to go prison rather than offend God. In his exalted state he also remained faithful to God and served him with a sincere heart. Of holy Anna, who like holy Simeon was to see with corporal eyes the Saviour of the world before her death, we know that she spent her youth in virginal purity, in the married state walked in the fear of God, and in her widowhood served God day and night by fasting and prayer. Why did these and all other saints adhere to God in every situation of life and live so piously? Because they always had their last end before their eyes, because they again and again said to themselves: I wish to go to heaven.

(i.) You must do the same. Whether you are single or married, rich or poor, in good or ill health, happy or unhappy, in the society of good or evil companions, everywhere and always the thought should be vividly in your mind: I wish to go to heaven, if you are single, thank God that you have not the burden of a household on your shoulders, or the education of children to see to, and strive to lead a virtuous life: if you are married, conscientiously fulfil your duties as husband or wife and parent, and patiently endure the hardships of your state of life; if you are rich, make good use of your substance and give alms; if you are poor, preserve patience, hoping for the heavenly benefits which are promised to the pious poor; if you are sick, be resigned to the will of God and offer your sickness to him as a penance for your sins; if you are obliged to live with wicked people be on your guard lest you deviate from the right path.

PERORATION.

Thus serve God in every situation of life with fervor and fidelity. That you may be able to do this you must earnestly and continually desire heaven. Why should you attach your heart to this world which is a vale of tears, and in which you have no lasting· abode? Why should you not aspire to heaven, your supreme object, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, and with great desire expects you, having already prepared % place for you. Heaven is your home. *Sursum corda.* Heaven must be the object of all your wishes and desires. I desire to go ⁵o heaven; this must be your first thought when you awake in the morning, and your last thought at night before you close youi eyes in sleep; let this be your thought at your work, in good and in evil days and in every situation of life. Labor for heaven, fight for heaven, suffer for heaven, live for heaven, and show in every stage and in every situation of life, that you are in earnest about reaching heaven ; then you will experience to your sweetest consolation the truth of the words, that he who earnestly desires i* vill obtain heaven. Amen.

THIRD SKETCH.

AT WHAT TIME, WHERE, AND IN WHAT MANNER DID CHRIST ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?

And the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God.—Mark 16: 19.

The feast of the Ascension is one of the most ancient in the Church, dating back to the earliest ages of Christianity; St. Augustine does not hesitate to ascribe its introduction to the Apostles, it being but natural that they should have annually celebrated the day on which they saw their Lord and Master ascend into heaven. Since the day when St. Helena built a magnificent church on the sacred spot where Christ ascended into heaven, this feast has been celebrated with the greatest solemnity. At the present day the Easter candle is extinguished after the gospel at High Mass. This candle symbolizes the risen Saviour. Burning it for forty days at High Mass on Sundays, signifies that Jesus Christ remained upon earth forty days after his resurrection and often appeared to his disciples. The extinction of it on this day reminds us that Christ at his Ascension withdrew his visible pre-

sence from us. We shall to-day consider a few circumstances of the Ascension of Christ by answering four questions:

Z. *When,*
II. *Where,*
III. *In what manner, and*
IV. *For whatpurpose did Christ ascend into heaven?*

Part I.

I. *Christ ascended into heaven forty days after his Resurrection.* Our Saviour remained upon earth forty days, first, to convince his disciples of the reality of his Resurrection, and secondly, to give them the necessary instructions and commission for their high calling. St. Luke says in the epistle for this festival that to the Apostles *he showed himself alive after his passion, by many proofs, forforty days appearing to them and speaking of the kingdom of God.* The number *forty* is significant.

(a.) Our Saviour spent forty days in the *desert* to prepare himself by prayer and fasting for his pub'ic life; again, he remained on earth forty days after his Resurrection to ordain whatever was necessary for the welfare of his Church. He had during the forty days spent in the desert prepared himself for the work of our redemption, and he spent the same number of days after accomplishing this great work in order to apply to us through the Church the fruit of redemption. Recognize herein his love and solicitude, which made him ever intent upon our salvation, but at the same time also we must remember that it is our duty to be thankful to him, and to do everything that is required on our part to appropriate to ourselves the fruit of redemption.

(i.) The forty days which Christ spent upon earth after his Resurrection correspond to *the forty hours he remained in the grave.* On this St. Thomas of Aquin remarks: "As Jesus Christ remained forty hours in the sepulchre as a proof of his real death, so he remained forty days on earth, as a proof of his new life." If Christ had raised himself to life immediately after his death on the cross, his death would have been considered doubtful; in like manner his Resurrection could have been doubted if immediately after it he had ascended into heaven. By remaining in the sepulchre for forty hours he proved his real death; so also by remaining on earth forty days he proved his real Resurrection; for during this time he frequently appeared to his Apostles and disciples, spoke and ate with them and allowed himself to be touched; in short, he showed himself to them as their Lord and

Master. Faith in his Resurrection being the foundation of our religion, Christ desired to establish it firmly by abiding forty days with his disciples. The sojourn of the risen Saviour on earth for forty days is the most firm foundation of our faith, for it furnishes the proof that Jesus Christ is truly what he so often and so solemnly declared himself to be, the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world.

(c.) Finally, the forty days which Christ spent on earth after his Resurrection remind us of the forty years which the Israelites, after their departure from Egypt, were obliged to spend in the desert before they could enter the land of Canaan; they represent to us and symbolize the truth that we, although redeemed by Christ and freed from the thraldom of sin and of Satan, have to undergo a laborious and dangerous journey before we can enter heaven.

2. *On a Thursday.* Ascension day is the fortieth day after Easter Sunday and is therefore annually celebrated on a Thursday. The passion of our Saviour commenced on a Thursday, for it was on Holy Thursday that he sweat blood in the Garden of Olives, was betrayed and apprehended. Thus it was to be a Thursday on which, triumphant over sufferings and death, he entered into heaven. Herein is contained a very important lesson, for God wishes to teach us that on the very day he sends us afflictions he prepares our glory. The very day of our greatest humiliation may be the beginning of our greatest exaltation, and the beginning and cause of our salvation. Among many thousands of saints see, for example, St. Ignatius of Loyola. He was a soldier, already twenty-nine years of age, not wicked or corrupt, but very worldly-minded and ambitious. At the siege of Pampeluna he was seriously wounded, his right leg having been shattered. He lay sick for a long time, suffering great pain In order to while away the time he asked for romances and noveis, but as there were none in the house, the Life of Christ, and the Lives of the Saints were handed to him. By the reading of these books a thorough change was wrought in Ignatius, and he resolved to dedicate himself entirely to God and to become a soldier of Jesus Christ. In spite of all obstacles he put his resolution into effect, established the Society of Jesus, accomplished an immense amount of good for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and is now a great saint in heaven. Notice that the day on which St. Ignatius received his wound was for him the beginning and the first cause of his conversion. If he had met with no sufferings, he would no doubt have remained in the world, and perhaps he would not have been saved. Therefore, if God visits you with afflictions, accept and bear them with patience and employ them

for the salvation of your souls. Consider the words of St, Augustine: "What you suffer is a medicine, not a punishment, a chastisement, not a condemnation. Do not refuse the rod if you do not wish to be excluded from the eternal inheritance."

3. *At noon.* Christ ascended at noon-time, because as the sun reaches the height of his course by noon, so the Eternal Sun of Justice attained the height of his glory by ascending into heaven. In explanation of the words (A. 54: 18): "Evening and morning, and at noon I will speak and declare, and he shall hear my voice," St. Augustine says: "In the evening I find the Lord on the cross, in the morning risen from the dead, and at noon ascending into heaven. In the evening I refer to the patience of the dying God-man, in the morning to the life of the risen Saviour, and pray that at noon, sitting at the right hand of God, he may hear me." And St. Prosper remarks: "In the evening the Lord dies on the cross, in the morning he rises, at noon he enters heaven, that the three parts of the day may be sanctified." This should also be an invitation to us to sanctify the three principal parts of the day, morning, noon and evening, by pious aspirations and prayer and by making a firm resolution to devote our life to the service of Christ

Part II.

The place from which our Lord ascended into heaven is Mount Olivet, situated two thousand paces distant from Jerusalem. Between it and the city there is a valley through which the brook Cedron flows. The mount is so high that from it one can over look the city of Jerusalem.

Ji

1. Mount Olivet was to Christ a mount of prayer. There he passed whole nights in watching and praying; there he poured forth his soul in humble supplications on the eve of his passion. By choosing this mount for the place of Ascension, he teaches us that in order to be united with him in heaven we must keep our eyes continually fixed on heaven by fervent prayer. St. Alphonsus very appropriately says: "The reprobates in hell were condemned because they neglected prayer; had they prayed they would not have perished eternally. The saints gained heaven because they were zealous in prayer; if they had not prayed they would have attained neither sanctity nor eternal salvation." Indeed, after baptism nothing is so necessary as prayer. The reason is simply that without prayer we cannot obtain the grace which we need to work out our salvation. If we are sinners we need grace to be converted and reconciled to God; if we are just we also need grace to overcome temptations

to which we are subject in so many ways, and to do good works and persevere in justice to the end. He who neglects prayer will perish, whether he be a sinner or a just man ; for if he be a sinner, he will remain such, but if he be a just man, he will become a sinner. When therefore you contemplate our Lord's Ascension from Mount Olivet, remember that this is the mount on which he often prayed, but especially on the last night of his life, and do not fail to ascend that mountain by fervent and devout prayer at home and in the church.

2. Our Saviour commenced his passion on Mount Olivet. To-day he passed over the brook Cedron by the very same way which he had chosen on that mournful night when he was betrayed by his ungrateful disciple into the hands of his enemies. The same mountain being thus the mount of his passion as well as of his Ascension we are reminded that Christ entered into his glory through sufferings, and that the obligation is imposed upon us to suffer with him. "We are joint-heirs with Christ, yet so if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him."—*Rom.* 8:17. Christ is our model to which we must conform ourselves ; as it was necessary for him to suffer in order to enter into his glory, so there is no other way for us to enter heaven than by the way of the cross. The rich man who feasted sumptuously every day was buried in hell, and poor Lazarus who was full of sores and suffered hunger was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.—*Luke* 16: 22. Accordingly, let us not expect to find heaven on earth, but bear with patience the sufferings and tribulations of life, seeking consolation in the words of the Apostle : "If we suffer with Christ, we shall also be glorified with him."—*Rom.* 8: 17.

Part III.

The manner of the Ascension is thus described by the Evangelist : "And he led them out as far as Bethania; and lifting up his hands he blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst he blessed them, he departed from them, and was carried up to heaven." *Luke* 24: 50, 51.

(λ.) Christ blessed his disciples, not by mere pious wishes, but in reality. In consequence of this blessing, the Apostles were protected from the contamination of the world, they preserved the unity of faith and the bond of charity, and after a glorious martyrdom entered into the joy of their Lord. We partake of this divine blessing through the ministry of the priesthood. It is especially at the close of the mass that Christ renews his blessing, which you should always receive with due reverence, confidence

and devotion. At mass the memory of the passion and death, the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ is renewed; it is at the close of the Mass that Christ again stands, as it were, in the person of the priest, on Mount Olivet, on which he stood at his Ascension, and gives you his blessing. Who would neglect to avail themselves of this blessing?

(b.) Christ ascended into heaven by his own power. He *was not alone,* but surrounded by all the just of the Old Testament. "Ascending on high he led captivity captive."—*Eph.* 4: 8. He led those souls that were captive in Limbo, the saints of the Old Law, captive by the bonds of charity. At sight of the heavenly Jerusalem they must have exclaimed in an ecstasy of joy and admiration: "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord" *(Ps.* 83: 2): whilst the angelic choirs, meeting their incarnate God, salute him, saying: "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor and glory, and benediction.—*Apoc.* 5: 12.

Part IV.

For what purpose did Christ ascend into heaven? For his own and for our sake.

1. *He ascended for his own sake.* He celebrated his triumph as conqueror of death and hell, and took possession of the crown prepared for him by his virtues and merits, *to be rewarded for his obedience io the Father·.* "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work."—*John* 4: 34. *For his humility,* which induced him to be born in a stable and die on the cross, and for all his other virtues, *meekness, patience, fervor in Prayer, love ofpoverty, bounty* and *compassion.* If our heavenly Father rewards those who give even a little water to drink in his name, his justice required that he should also reward his Son for so many virtues. Therefore, Christ himself said to his heavenly Father: "I have glorified thee upon earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now glorify thou me, O Father, with thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with thee."—*John* 17: 4, 5. Verily, for his self-abasement and ob'.dience unto the death of the cross, "God hath exalted him, ard hath given him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."—*Phil.* 2: 9-11.

2. *Jesus Christ ascended into heaven for our sake also.*

(a.) He opened the gates of heaven for us which heretofore had been closed even to the just. "In my father's house there are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and will take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be."—*John* 14: 2, 3. If we follow the Son of God he will say to his Father: " Where I am, there also shall my minister be."

(Æ.) Great as our frailty may be, the presence of our first-born brother encourages our hope. " God, who is rich in mercy. . . . hath quickened us together in Christ. . . . and hath raised us up together; and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus."—*Eph.* 2: 4-6. We possess two particular pledges of our hope: the first is, that in Christ God descended upon earth. Is it not a greater wonder for a king to come into the hut of his servant than for the servant to be admitted into the palace of the king? The second is that our nature, our flesh, ascended to-day into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of the Father.

U.) Our hope should increase by reflecting that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven to be our advocate and intercessor. He is the High-Priest, "always living to make intercession for us."—*Heb.* 7: 25. Christ himself assures us that he will ask the Father for us. " And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever."—*John* 14: 16. Though we may have sinned most grievously, we shall find grace and mercy if we sincerely repent: " My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just; and he is the propitiation for our sins."—*I. John* 2: 1, 2.

(d.) Finally, Jesus Christ ascended into heaven to induce us to lift up the eyes of our spirit and the desire of our hearts towards heaven. Seek the things that are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Remember the poor leper whose cheerfulness increased as his dreadful malady grew worse, because he saw thereby the coveted possession of heaven draw nearer and nearer.

PERORATION.

Jesus Christ left his *foot-prints* on the spot whence he ascended. His face was turned to the West, towards Europe, thus blessing

our pagan forefathers. Let us manifest our gratitude to our divine Saviour by clinging to him firmly in this age of infidelity. We have no lasting city here, but we seek one to come. *Sursum corda.* Heaven is our home; there is only one way leading to it and to our Father's house: the way of the cross and Christian self-denial. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."—*Malt.* 16: 24. Millions have gone before us, and what others have done we also can do, if we only have the will, for "where there is a will there is **a way." "I can do all things in him who strengthened!** *Phil.* **4:13: Amen.**

FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTL

Epistle.—Z. *Cor.* i1: 23-29. Brethren: For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye, and eat: this is my body which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of me. In like manner also the chalice, after he had supped, saying: This chalice is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink this chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until he come. Therefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.

Gospel.—*John* 6: 56-59. At that time, Jesus said to the multitude of the Jews: My flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this **bread sh-..... - for ever.**

FIRST SKETCH.

ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICATION OF THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTL

This is the bread that came down from heaven.—John 6 : 59.

The Church to-day celebrates the most joyful feast of the year. Look over the wide world, travel through all the great cities in

which Catholic hearts are beating, go into the smallest villages where there is a priest, everywhere you will find on this day jo) and exultation. Green trees and fragrant flowers adorn the streets through which our Lord passes under the appearance of bread ; the whole Catholic Church resemblesa magnificent temple, for she celebrates to-day the feast of Corpus Christi and carries about publicly in solemn procession her God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, that all may fall on their knees and devoutly adore him, since faith teaches them that Jesus Christ, the Man-God, is really and substantially present under the appearances of bread and wine. Let us make a short meditation on the feast of Corpus Christi:

I. On its origin, and
II. On its significance.

Part I.

1. *The feast of Corpus Christi was not celebrated in the early days of the Church.* In the primitive ages of the Church we find no traces of the feast of Corpus Christi. The Christians of those days would not have dared to celebrate this feast with a public procession through the streets, since they were obliged to hold even their ordinary worship in secret places, generally in the Catacombs. They were not, hewever, altogether without the feast of Corpus Christi, since this feast is nothing else than the celebration of the institution of the Blessed Eucharist at the Last Supper, which even in the time of the Apostles was annually celebrated on the day on which Christinstitutedit, namely, on Holy Thursday. Thus it continued for over twelve hundred years. The days of Holy Week, however, are sad and sorrowful, and the contemplation of the passion and death of Christ, which the Church proposes to her children, so fills their hearts with grief as to unfit them to give expression to sentiments of festive joy. Therefore, the Church considered it an act pleasing to God to institute a particular feast for the celebration of the Blessed Eucharist, for which she chose Thursday after Trinity Sunday.

2. *The cause of the celebration of this feast.* God himself indicated that the celebration of Corpus Christi would be acceptable to him, and as he chooses that which is foolish in the eyes of the world in order to confound the wise, his wisdom here also pursued the same course. The first circumstance which led to the celebra'ion of the feast of Corpus Christi was a vision granted to the Blessed Juliana, a nun of Liege. She frequently saw the moon in splendor and brightness, but with one side of it in darkness. After much prayer and fasting she was enlightened

as to the meaning· and signification of this apparition. God revealed to her that the moon represented the Catholic Church, and that the dark spot signified the want of a special feast in honor of the Blessed Eucharist. At the same time she received the command that she should induce the authorities of the Church to institute such a feast, in order that by a public and solemn adoration the insults offered to the adorable Sacrament might he atoned for. The humble virgin was terrified at such a command, for she deemed herself unworthy. For a long time she did not dare communicate to others the revelation she had received, till finally, after much prayer, being convinced of the truth, she could no longer resist the promptings of her heart. In the year 1230 she disclosed the apparition to a few men equally renowned for piety and learning. These men declared the apparition to be of God, and induced Robert, Bishop of Liege, to institute in his diocese a feast for the adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

3. *Institution of thisfeast.* Robert, Bishop of Liege, in the year 1246, published a synodal decree, announcing to all the priests of his diocese that a feast would be instituted in honor of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and celebrated in the following year for the first time. His death pervented this intention being put into effect, but a few years later his directions were carried out and the festival celebrated, not only in Liege, but also in many other dioceses. Several bishops, following this example, the feast of Corpus Christi was introduced into many other countries, especially into Germany, where it was celebrated with the greatest solemnity. Finally, Pope Urban III., in the year 1264, issued a bull in which he commanded this feast to be celebrated throughout the whole Church. This ordinance was confirmed by Pope Clement V. in the Council at Vienna, in the year 1311. Several Pontiffs granted special indulgences for this feast, which has been universally introduced and celebrated with the greatest solemnity since the fourteenth century. With the feast originated also the procession, for the faithful felt themselves urged to manifest externally their joy at the celebration of so great a festival, so that the whole world might learn what an immense treasure of grace we have received from Jesus Christ in the institution of the Blessed Eucharist. Thus it was primarily a pious virgin through whom the celebration of Corpus Christi was suggested, but God himself was the author of this feast, because by a wonderful apparition and interior inspiration he manifested to Blessed Juliana his desire for its institution.

Part II.

Now a few words on the signification of the feast. The feast of Corpus Christi is—

i. *A feast of thanksgiving.* We owe thanks to our divine Saviour—

(1.) *Because he continually dwells among us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.* His ineffable love found a way in which he could still remain among us after his Ascension; he instituted the Blessed Eucharist, wherein he is present as God and man, as he formerly walked upon earth, and as he now sits at the right hand of God. Thus he fulfilled to the very letter the promise which he made to his Apostles: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."—*Matt.* 28: 20. We are, therefore, as blest as the people who lived at the time when Christ walked visibly among them, for we have the same Jesus present in the Blessed Eucharist as they had; in truth we are far more favored than they, for whilst they had to travel sometimes for days to come to Jesus, we have him in our midst and can without any trouble visit him in the Blessed Eucharist. Do not think that Christ has changed in the least respect; what he was in the days of his earthly life he is to-day still—a God of love and mercy. He calls to us to-day from the tabernacle: "Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—*Matt,* ii: 28. Every one who comes to him in any necessity and asks with humility and confidence will receive consolation and help. The venerable Father Alvarez one day saw Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist with his hands full of graces, seeking, as it were, for those to whom he could impart them. A renowned spiritual writer (Debussi) says: "Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist is to those who devoutly visit him a helper in their necessities, a guide on their way, a counsellor in their doubts, a light in their darkness, a support in their weakness, a comforter in their sufferings." And St. Alphonsus says: "I can assure you that Christ gives to a soul who lovingly tarries before the Blessed Sacrament more consolation than the whole world with all its joys and pleasures can bestow."

(3.) *Because he daily offers himself to God, his heavenly Father.* What our divine Saviour in his infinite love once accomplished on the cross, where he offered himself for us in a bloody manner, he daily does in the holy mass, where he offers himself by the hands of the priests in an unbloody manner. Each holy mass is of the same infinite value as the sacrifice of the cross, because it

is the same who offers and is offered—Jesus Christ, our Lord. Hence St. Thomas of Aquin says, that we can derive from every holy mass the fruit and advantage which Christ effected on Good Friday by his death on the cross. And St. Francis of Sales remarks: "The mass is the sun of spiritual excercises, the abyss of divine mercy, the fountain of divine love, the heart of devotion, the soul of piety, and the most precious means of obtaining grace." But especially is the sacrifice of the mass a propitiatory sacrifice, because, according to the council of Trent, by it we obtain mercy and find seasonable aid.—*Sess.* 22, *chap,* 2. Alphonse of Albuquerque, a Portuguese general, was in great danger of losing his life and the lives of his soldiers during a great storm. He took an innocent child in his arms, lifted it up towards heaven and said: "We are indeed sinners, but this tender child surely is without sin. O Lord, spare us who are guilty, for the love of this innocent child." Behold! this humble prayer and the aspect of this innocent child pleased God, the storm subsided, and joy and gratitude fortheir wonderful rescuebanished all fear of death. Now if the aspect of an innocent child could so prevail upon the heart of an angry God, how much more will the aspect of his own innocent Son prevail upon the heart of the eternal Father when in holy mass we offer him with a contrite heart by the hands of the priest! What would become of the world, if it were deprived of the unbloody sacrifice of the mass? "I, for my part, believe," says St. Leonard of Port Maurice, "that if the mass were not, the world would long ago have perished, because it could no longer have borne the weight of so many sins."

(r.) *Because he gives himself to us in holy communion for the nourishment of our souls.* It was not enough for our divine Saviour to be always present among us and to offer himself daily for us; he also wished to come into our hearts and to be most intimately united with us; for this reason he instituted the Blessed Eucharist as communion. When we communicate, Jesus comes to us. What graces may we not expect from him! Whithersoever our divine Saviour went during his earthly life, he left traces of his merciful love and blessings. He entered the house of Zachary and sanctified his forerunner, John, in his mother's womb; he was present at the marriage in Cana of Galilee and changed water into wine; he came into Peter's house and cured his sick mother-in-law, into the house of Matthew and there converted many sinners. (Zacheus, Jairus, Naim, Lazarus.) Will he not, therefore, bestow graces upon the soul to whom he comes? Who could doubt it? He imparts his grace to such a soul most lavishly, provided she be well disposed, and enriches her with all the fruits of the Holy Ghost.—*Gal. 6:* 22. But still more, Jesus gives us in holy communion not only graces, but *himself.*

"0 wonderful love," exclaims St. Chrysostom, "the Lord gives us himself in the Blessed Eucharist, he gives us all that he has, so that nothing more remains for him to give!" When we communicate, Jesus not only makes his abode with us, but he unites himself so intimately to us that we, as it were, become one with him : "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth m me, and I in *him.."John* 6:57. In ft ct, by means of communion we are, in a certain sense, changed into Jesus Christ. St. Augustine represents Christ as saying : "I am the f^od of the grown, yet you cannot change me into yourself as food for the flesh, but you will be changed into me." And St. Bernard says: "To eat the body of Christ is nothing else than to become the body of Christ." It is true we do not cease to be men, but Christ penetrates our human nature as fire penetrates iron, and renders it glowing; it ennobles us, as a good graft ennobles a tree, and renders us conformable to him in our thoughts, words and actions, so that we can say with the Apostle: "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me."—*Gal* 2; 20. Oh, what thanks do we owe to our divine Saviour for the institution of a Sacrament so holy as is the Blessed Eucharist! How solicitous we should be to become partakers of the graces of this wonderful Sacrament by devoutly visiting it, by constantly assisting at mass and by frequent and worthy communions!

2. *Itis afeastofthe triumph offaiih ;* for it is a public profession—

(σ.) *Of our holy Catholic faith in general.* All Catholics, without distinction of state or sex, crowned heads as well as citizens and peasants, assemble to-day before the Blessed Sacrament and thereby confess that they adore this Sacrament with the most profound veneration; in fact, because we are Catholics the Council of Trent calls the solemn procession with the Blessed Sacrament on this day *a triumph of our faith.* The heretic Arius, having won over the emperor to his side, was allowed to return from his exile. His adherents all assembled with the intention of conducting him in triumph into the city, but his triumphal train was destined to be his funeral procession. Necessity compelling him to withdraw from the procession for a time, he remained away too long, and when a search was instituted he was found lying in his blood with his entrails protruding from his body. If the Arians manifested their belief in the false doctrines of a heretic by participating in a triumphal train, is it not just that we should also publicly testify to the faith of the holy Catholic Church by devoutly participating in to-day's procession?

(λ) *Of our belief in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar* ***in*** *particular.* Not only the Jews and Gentiles, but even millions of

Christians, who in the lapse of ages, and especially in the sixteenth century apostatized from the Catholic Church, deny the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist. Some say that the consecrated host is merely bread, and that it is idolatry to adore it. Others admit the Presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist, but confine it exclusively to communion, and assert that Christ is not present in the Sacrament of the Altar before or out of time of communion. Therefore they also reject the adoration of the Sacrament, calling it idolatry. Against these unbelievers the Catholic Church, sustained by the plain word of God and Christian Tradition, declares that Jesus Christ is truly, really and substantially present in the Blessed Eucharist under the appearance of bread. In order to give testimony of this faith in the face of the whole world, she holds to-day a solemn procession with the Blessed Eucharist in the open air, and all Catholics, the clergy as well as the laity, adore Jesus with the most profound veneration, and continually repeat: "Praise and adoration be to the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar."

3. *It is a love-feast,* in which we are to manifest, in an especial manner, our love for Jesus:

(a.) *By showing the most profound veneration for the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.* The gospel tells us of many people who adored Jesus. Thus the Wise Men from the East *{Matt.* 2:2, 11); a leper *{Matt.* 8: 2) ; Jairus *{Matt.* 9: 18); the disciples *{Matt.* 14:33) ; the women after his Resurrection *{Matt.* 28: 9); the eleven disciples *{Matt.* 28: 17). And in the Apocalypse (7 ; 9, 10) we read that the saints of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues cried with a loud voice, saying : "Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb," and that the angels that stood round about the throne fell upon their faces, and adored God. Now what men have done on earth and the angels are doing in heaven, we also should do ; we should show divine homage to the Blessed Eucharist and adore Jesus present therein. The Church requires this of us. Catholics of all times did it and many distinguished themselves by their particular devotion to the Blessed Eucharist. I shall mention only two instances : Count Rudolph of Hapsburg, afterwards emperor of Germany, and Charles IL, king of Spain. The latter on January 20, 1685, was riding in his carriage on the outskirts of Madrid, accompanied by many noblemen and a great multitude of people. He met a priest carrying the Viaticum to a poor sick person living in a neighboring village. As soon as the king saw the priest with the Blessed Sacrament he quickly got out of his carriage, fell on his knees and humbly adored Jesus. He then invited the priest to get into the carriage, and followed it on foot

with uncovered head to the house of the sick man. There he again fell on his knees when the priest alighted, and adored Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist; entering the house he knelt down and devoutly prayed whilst the priest wasgiving Viaticum. Should not the example of this pious king encourage you to-day and always to adore the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar with the most profound reverence and devotion ?

(i.) By atoningfor the many outrages and insults which are offered to him in the Blessed Eucharist. The Blessed Eucharist is a Sacrament of love, for in no other does the love of Jesus for mankind manifest itself in so wonderful a manner as in this. "But, O God," exclaims St. Alphonsus, "what insults must our amiable Redeemer endure in this Sacrament from those very souls, for love of whom he wished to remain on our altars." How much and how grievously Jesus is dishonored and offended in the Most Holy Sacrament by curses and imprecations, by the irreverence of Catholics in church, and by unworthy communions! He himself complained of this to Blessed Margaret of Alacoque. Whilst praying one day before the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus showed her his heart upon a throne of fire, encircled with a crown of thorns, and surmounted by a cross, and he said to her: "Contemplate this heart which loves men so much that it has done all for them and is ready to offer itself once more for them; and consider at the same time how most men requite such love with ingratitude, how they treat me with tepidity, irreverence, sacrilege and contempt in this Sacrament of Love." In view of the many and great insults which are daily offered to our loving Saviour in the Most Holy Sacrament, we should certainly rejoice that on this day we have an opportunity of making some reparation and atonement by a fervent participation in the solemn procession and by devout prayer.

PERORATION.

Manifest great love towards the Blessed Eucharist, not only to-day, but every day of your life. Have a profound veneration for this holy Sacrament, and adore it, as often as you approach the altar, with the greatest devotion. Never dishonor this Sacrament by curses and imprecations, and if by inadvertence such a word escape your lips, repent at once of your fault, and say: Praise and adoration be to the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Beware of every irreverence in church; consider that you are before Jesus Christ, the infinitely holy, before whom the knees of all creatures bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and who one day will be your Judge. Visit Jesus in the

tabernacle as often as possible, especially in the afternoon of Sundays and holidays; the hours whic you spend before the altar in devotion belong to the most blessed of your life and will afford you great solace in life and at the hour of death. Esteem yourselves happy that you can often kneel at the table of the Lord; but never approach it except with a pure, well-prepared heart. If you love to be with Jesus on earth, visiting and receiving him often with a loving heart, you may hope that you will one day be united with him in heaven, there to adore him **eternally** with the angels and saints. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

THE REASON WHY THE CHURCH HAS INSTITUTED THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

Myflesh is meat indeed; and my blood is drink indeed.—John 6: 56.

The feast which we celebrate to-day is called "Corpus Christi," the feast of the Body of Christ. The Council of Trent in regard to the celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi says: "The holy Synod declares, that this custom was piously and religiously introduced into the Church, in order that this great and venerable Sacrament may be honored with special veneration every year on a certain day, as a solemn festival, and that it may be carried reverently and with honor in procession through the streets and public places: for it is most meet that certain holidays be appointed on which all Christians may, with special and unusual demonstrations, testify that their hearts are grateful to their common Lord and Redeemer for a benefit so truly divine and ineffable, in which the victory and triumph of his death are represented. And so indeed did it behove victorious truth to celebrate a triumph over falsehood and heresy, that her adversaries at the sight of so much splendor, and placed in the midst of such great joy of the universal Church, may either pine away (*Ps.* 111: 10), weakened and broken, or, touched with shame and confounded, at length repent."—*Sess.* 13, *chap.* 5. In these words the Council assigns the reasons why the Church has instituted the feast of Corpus Christi. On these reasons we shall to-day make a short meditation:

The Church has instituted the feast of Corpus Christi for four reasons:

I. To make a solemn and public profession of her faith in the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.
II. To make reparation and atonement for insults offered to him in this Sacrament.
III. To give him thanks for the graces which he imparts to us in this Sacrament, and
IV. Finally, to urge us frequently to visit and receive this Sacrament.

Part I.

1. *Jesus Christ is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.* The sacred Host which is preserved in the tabernacle, exposed for adoration and carried about in procession, received in communion, or borne to the sick, is Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man. It is true that to our senses there appears to be only bread; yet this bread is not bread, but Jesus Christ, who under the appearance of bread is present with his Divinity and humanity, as he once lived upon earth and now sits at the right hand of God. When Christ walked upon earth, people saw only his humanity, not his Divinity; the saints in heaven behold both his humanity and Divinity; we upon earth see neither, but only the appearance of bread. This difference is not essential, for as a king remains a king whether he be dressed in the garments of a king or a laborer, so Christ remains Christ, God and man, no matter whether we behold him in his divine majesty, or as man, or under the species of bread. In the Most Holy Sacrament we therefore have the same Jesus Christ whom the saints and angels adore in heaven. This is the Catholic faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist, which faith was never attacked for a thousand years. A certain Berengarius of Tours was the first who, to the consternation of all Christendom, denied the Real Presence in the Blessed Eucharist. His contemporary, Lanfranc, to refute him, appealed to all Christendom, which heretofore had unanimously believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist, and exclaimed: "Inquire of all who understand the Latin language or other writings, inquire of the Greeks, the Armenians, and the Christians of every nation; with one voice they will profess and testify to this faith."[1] The heresy of Berengarius was condemned by several councils, he himself frequently retracted, but never sincerely until approaching death conquered his pride and brought him back to the true faith. In the sixteenth century other false teachers arose who rejected the belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist, as also many other tenets of the Catholic Church. To the adherents of these false teachers the Holy Sacrament of the Altai is nothing more than a mere sign which reminds them of the Pre

sence of Christ, or bread, in which Jesus is only present at the receiving thereof. The adoration of the Blessed Eucharist is therefore in their eyes an act of idolatry because they see nothing in it but bread.

2. The Church has instituted the feast of Corpus Christi in order to give testimony before the whole world to the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist, and to establish the fact that she cannot be made to waver in her faith by heretics and unbelievers. For this reason the festival of Corpus Christi was celebrated with the greatest solemnity at the time of the Council of Trent when the Blessed Eucharist was most vehemently attacked and blasphemed. Besides the Papal Nuncios, Legates, Cardinals and ambassadors, two hundred bishops, wearing their copes and mitres and carrying their crosiers, assisted at the procession; they were followed by a countless train of the faithful of every condition, age and sex, and from the mouths of all resounded the praise of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, present under the appearance of bread in the Blessed Eucharist.

Here you have one reason why you also should accompany the procession on the feast of Corpus Christi; thereby you make a solemn profession of your faith, and say, if not in words, at least in deed: I am a Catholic, and firmly believe what the Catholic Church proposes to be believed, and especially that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Blessed Eucharist. This profession of faith is good and salutary, for Christ emphatically says: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in *heaven."Afatt.* 10: 33. Another reason, however, why the Church has instituted the feast of Corpus Christi is *to make reparation to our divine Saviour for the insults offered to him in this Sacrament.*

Part II.

I. Who can number all the outrages and profanations to which Jesus is exposed in the Blessed Eucharist? How many go to church without giving him the least sign of adoration, and behave in his presence more irreverently and unbecomingly than they do even in an ordinary house! How many instances does history record of churches having been destroyed, altars overturned and tabernacles desecrated by the enemies of our holy faith! How often does it happen that godless men break into churches, steal the holy vessels, cast the sacred Hosts on the ground, and trample them under their feet? How often is the Most Holy Sacrament insulted by blasphemous persons? Who can number those unfortunate people who with grievous sins on

their conscience approach the altar and sacrilegiously **receive** communion! What little veneration and devotion is manifested for Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist even by Catholics, who are not of the number of the wicked! How indevout and distracted they are at holy mass, how cold at communion! Immediately after communion they yield themselves again to the distractions and levities of worldly life, and resemble those of whom the Apostle says that they do not distinguish the body of the Lord from common food.

2. Such are the insults heaped on our divine Saviour in the Blessed Eucharist. The Church is aware of this, and most sorrowfully laments it; but because it is not in her power to prevent these profanations, she endeavors to make some reparation to Jesus for them by the annual celebration of Corpus Christi. For this reason she celebrates this feast with the greatest solemnity; she adorns the churches and altars and celebrates a solemn High Mass in honor of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; she carries the Sacred Host in solemn procession, amid the ringing of bells and the boom of cannon, into the open air and through the gaily decorated streets, praising in sacred hymns her God, present, but concealed, under the form of bread. Unite your praises with those of the Church and adore the Blessed Eucharist most profoundly. If you remember that you have in any way dishonored and offended Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist, humbly ask his pardon, and in reparation offer to him the homage which is paid to him to-day and during the Octave by all Catholic Christendom. The Church has also instituted the feast of Corpus Christi *to give thanks to Jesus for the graces received in this Sacrament.*

Part ILL

I. The emperor Nero had a carpet made by the most skilful artist that could be found, into which all kinds of precious stones, gems and jewels, were woven. When Seneca saw the admirable work, he said to the Emperor: "By this you show that you have become poor." The same may be said of the Blessed Eucharist. Since this Sacrament contains all the treasures of grace, Jesus Christ by the institution of it impoverished himself. Therefore the Council of Trent says that our Lord in this Sacrament has, as it were, exhausted the treasures of his divine love for men. In the Sacrament of the altar Jesus Christ offers himself continually to his heavenly Father as a propitiation for our sins; as a continually flowing fountain of grace he co Hill .unicates to us the fruits of his merits; as our Redeemer he makes us participators of all the graces which he has merited for us by his life, passion

and death, and being risen from the dead, and sitting at the right hand of God, he is to us a pledge of a joyful resurrection and of eternal life in heaven. With justice, therefore, St. Augustine says: "I venture to say that, although God is almighty, he ‹ auld not give vs more ; though he is the wisest, he knew not how to give me ?, and though he is the richest, he had no more to bestow than he did bestow in this holy mystery."

2. Now, the Church, in annually celebrating the feast of Corpus Christi, wishes to represent vividly to our minds the ineffable love and grace which Jesus has manifested for us in the institution of the Blesssd Eucharist. My children, she cries out to us, consider how Jesus Christ gives you in the Blessed Eucharist everything which his love is able to give ; therefore return thanks to him. He is always present in the tabernacle, inviting and calling you to him, so that he may be your consoler and helper in every necessity of body and soul; he offershimself for you daily in holy mass, in order continually to apply to you the merits of his bloody sacrifice on the cross ; as often as you receive communion he enters into your heart and unites himself most intimately with you, that his word may be fulfilled: "He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me."—*John* 6: 58. Oh, give thanks to your divine Saviour to-day and always for these graces, and resolve zealously to employ them for your eternal salvation. Finally, the Church has instituted the feast of Corpus Christi *with a view to animate us frequently to visit and to receive this Sacrament.*

Part IV.

i. We delight in visiting a kind friend ; we make use of every opportunity to go to him and entertain ourselves with him. Where have we a better friend than our divine Saviour ? Does he not love us more ardently than ever man could love us? Are we not indebted to him for more than we have ever received from our greatest benefactor ? Has he not in the superabundance of his love shed the last drop of his blood on the cross? Do we not in an especial manner recognize his love, his inscrutable love for us, in being always present in the Blessed Eucharist ? Does he not, as it were, cry out to us : "Behold, I love you from the depth of my heart, therefore it is impossible for me to separate myself from you." The saints meditated upon this love, and for that reason they nowhere found sweeter consolation and greater pleasure than before Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist. St. Francis Xavier spent many nights in the church adoring Jesus in the tabernacle. St. Francis Regis did the same. Having spent the whole day in preaching and hearing confessions, he visited the

Blessed Sacrament in the evening and frequently remained before it during the whole night. All the saints had the like desire for Jesus present in the Blessed Eucharist; they visited him as often as they could, and enjoyed their happiest hours in his presence. Should not you also love to visit Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist, since in him you have not only your best friend but also your greatest benefactor, who is ready to give you all that you need for time and eternity?

2, But you should not only visit Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist as often as possible, you should also *receive him*. Great are the graces which are imparted to us by visiting him; but greater than all is the grace of holy communion, for here we receive not only graces, but Jesus Christ himself, the Author and Dispenser of all graces. He enters into our hearts, unites himself most intimately with us and makes us partakers of his divine nature. What natural food effects in our body, holy communion effects in our soul. As corporal food preserves the natural life, strengthens the body and fits it for work, so this heavenly food preserves the supernatural life of the soul, which is sanctifying grace, weakens our evil inclinations, strengthens and nourishes in us a desire for the practice of virtue, and is a sure pledge of a glorious resurrection and everlasting happiness. Therefore Christ says: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day."—*John* 6: 55. On account of these great and happy effects of holy communion, from the very beginning all Christians solicitous for their salvation deemed themselves happy to be allowed to approach frequently the table of the Lord. The first Christians communicated every day.—*Acts* 2: 46. St. Cyprian, in the third century, says of the Christians of his time that they also communicated every day. According to the account of St. Jerome daily communion was customary even in the fourth century among the Christians of Rome and Spain. If you desire to be good Christians, as were those of the first centuries, you must, like them, go often to communion. I do not say that you should receive every day or every week, but at least from time to time, as often as your circumstances permit and your confessors prescribe. Do not follow in the footsteps of those who confess and communicate only once a year, at Easter, and even then more from compulsion than free will; such persons, with few exceptions, are, as experience proves, tepid and forgetful of salvation, and it is very doubtful whether they will be saved.

PERORATION.

Knowing why the Church has instituted the feast of Corpus Christi, resolve to conduct yourselves towards the Blessed Eucharist as faithful Catholics. Manifest towards this Sacrament everywhere, in and out of church, the greatest veneration, because faith teaches you that therein Jesus Christ is truly **present** as God and man. Endeavor by your veneration and devotion before the Blessed Sacrament to atone in some measure for the insults offered in many ways to our divine Saviour. Give him thanks for the inestimable graces which he bestows upon you in this Sacrament, and promise him to visit him frequently in his tabernacles and to receive him in holy communion. I conclude with the words of that time-honored Catholic salutation: "Praise and adoration be to the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar now and for ever. Amen."

THIRD SKETCH.

THE MASS AND PROCESSION OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

He that eateth myfleshy and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him—*John* 6:57.

Our divine Saviour instituted the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar on Holy Thursday, the eve of his bitter passion; consequently the feast of Corpus Christi should be celebrated on the anniversary of that day in Holy Week; but as the Church on that day is too much occupied with the contemplation of the passion of Christ to give expression to joy, she has transferred the feast of Corpus Christi to this Thursday. And very appropriately, for the feasts of our Lord being all passed, it appears as the crown of all feasts. On Pentecost we celebrate the birthday of the holy Catholic Church; the celebration of Corpus Christi after Pentecost indicates that the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar is the vital source of the Church, the pledge of her truth, sanctity and perpetuity. Corpus Christi is celebrated not only in the church, but also in the open air, under the canopy of heaven; *in the church by a High Mass, and in the open air by a solemn procession.* This double celebration shall be the subject of my sermon to-day. We shall consider –

I. The mass of thisfestival, and
II. The procession.

Part I.

The entire mass of the festival refers to the mystery of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar and represents to our mind what faith teaches in regard to this mystery.

I. *The introit of* the mass reads: *He fed them with the fat of wheat, Alleluia; and filled them with honey out of the rock, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Rejoice to God, our helper; sing loud to the Lord of Jacob.* This introit consists of two verses from th ;gh-tieth psalm of David, in which he speaks of the benefits be ed by God on the children of Israel. The fat of wheat signifies the best wheat, and the honey out of the rock the best honey, and both in general the best gifts which God imparted in abundance to the Israelites in Chanaan, a country described in Holy Writ as flowing with milk and honey. The Israelites therefore had reason to praise the Lord with a joyful heart. The Church applies these precious gifts to the Blessed Eucharist, for as wheat and honey are the best products of nature, so the Sacrament of the Altar is the most excellent and blessed among all the sacraments, because it does not, like the others, contain graces but Jesus Christ himself, the Author and Dispenser of all grace. The Alleluias in the introit of the mass are expressions of joy and make the feast of Corpus Christi appear as a feast of joy and exultation.

2. In the *epistle* St. Paul speaks of the institution of the Sacrament of the Altar, and relates how the Lord Jesus, the same night that he was betrayed, took bread and wine and said: *Take ye and eat; this is my body. .. . This Chalice is the New Testament in my blood: This do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me.* Then the Apostle warns against the unworthy reception of this Sacrament, declaring that those who communicate unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord, and eat and drink judgment, that is, damnation to themselves. It is self-evident that the very introit of the mass of this festival treats of the Sacrament of the Altar, for Corpus Christi is the annual commemoration of Holy Thursday, on which our divine Saviour instituted the Holy Eucharist. Place yourselves to-day in spirit in the *cœnaculum* at Jerusalem, where Jesus in the midst of his disciples changed bread and wine into his sacred body and blood, where he celebrated the sacrifice of the mass for the first time, and for the first time distributed communion to his Apostles, and thank God with a grateful heart for the inestimable grace, with which you have been so often favored, of assisting at holy mass and receiving holy communion. Make the resolution to prepare yourselves well for each holy com-

munion, that it may be to your salvation and not to your damnation.

3. To-day's mass has a *sequence,* that is a hymn or a song of praise which begins with the words: *Lauda Sion, Salvatorem,* "Praise, O Sion, thy Redeemer," and expatiates on everything that faith teaches us concerning the Sacrament of the Altar, namely, that Jesus instituted it at the Last Supper and gave it to his disciples to eat, that this Sacrament was offered as the sacrifice of the New Testament, wherein bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, that Christ is whole and undivided in each species, that the breaking or division of the matter refers only to it, but not to Christ, who is present in the smallest particle, as he is in the whole, and finally, that to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is grace and salvation to the good, but perdition and damnation to the wicked. The *Sequence* concludes with a petition to Jesus that he will nourish and strengthen us on our pilgrimage here below with the bread of life, and call us hereafter to sit at the feast of love with his saints.

4. The *gospel* of the mass is taken from the gospel of St. John (chap. 6), in which our divine Saviour promises the institution of the Holy Eucharist and announces it in clear and emphatic words. First he affirms that his flesh is meat indeed, and that he would give to men his flesh to eat and his blood to drink. Then he speaks of the effects of this Sacrament, saying: *He that eateth my ilesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and* ***I*** *in him.* When we receive this Most Holy Sacrament we are most intimately united with Jesus, so that we can say with the Apostle: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." —*Gal.* 2 : 20. A result of this blessed union is that we live for ever. Therefore, Christ says: *As the living father hath sent me, and* ***I*** *live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me.* By this we understand, first, the supernatural life of grace; for holy communion saves us, as the Council of Trent teaches, from mortal sins, and enables us to preserve sanctifying grace, or the spiritual life. We also understand thereby the life of our body, for although holy communion does not prevent corporal death, yet it imparts to the body the germ of immortality and secures, provided we be of the number of the just, our resurrection with glorified bodies. St. Irenaeus says: "How is it possible for our bodies to decay eternally? Why should not they, nourished by the flesh of Christ and watered by his blood, rise to eternal life? Is not Christ the resurrection and the life? Our divine Saviour, uniting himself with our bodies by means of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, imparts to them the germ of life and glory; he is a fire slumbering beneath the ashes, which will

destroy everything which has been contaminated by sin. He only waits for the sound of the trumpet on the day of judgment, in order to transform in a moment the bodies of the just so that they may become similar to his own glorious body." The life which holy communion produces finally is the eternal life in heaven; for if we preserve the life of grace here below, we shall obtain hereafter the life of glory, as the gospel says in conclusion: Z& *that eateth this bread, shall live for ever.* How great then are the blessed effects of the Sacrament of the Altar, and how-solicitous should not we be to obtain them!

5. The *preface* of the mass is the same as that for Christmas. This is significant. On Christmas Day we celebrate the Nativity of Christ. Corpus Christi we can also call the Nativity of Christ in a twofold relation. As soon as the priest has pronounced the words of consecration over the bread and wine, Jesus is present on the Altar, as he was present in the stable at Bethlehem where Mary brought him forth. The feast of Corpus Christi reminds us of this wonderful birth of Christ which is accomplished by the consecration. When we receive communion Jesus Christ comes to us; he is, as it were, born in us. In general we may say, that this feast is the realization of the object of the birth of Christ. Our Saviour became man to reconcile and unite us with God from whom we had been separated, and through this union to lead us to salvation. This union takes place by the reception of the Holy Eucharist. Hence there are excellent reasons why to-day the preface should be the same as that for Christmas. **We** come now to the procession on this feast.

Part II.

The procession, which forms the main feature in the celebration of Corpus Christi, has a type in the solemn, triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. As we read in the gospel, multitudes of people carrying palm branches in their hands went to meet him, spread their garments in the way, cut boughs from the trees, laid them in the streets, praising the Lord and crying out: "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." To-day also the faithful strew with grass and flowers the streets and places through which the procession passes, adorn the houses, appear in their best clothes and repeat again and again the prayer: Praise and adoration be to the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. How is the procession made?

I. Children open the festive train. It was children who especi-**ally** felt themselves drawn to Jesus and who continually cried

out to him in the temple: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" on which account Christ said to the Scribes and Pharisees who were moved with indignation: "Have you never read: Out of the mouths of infants and sucklings thou has perfected praise." Again it was children that Jesus especially loved, and hence he said; "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such."—*Matt.* 19: 14. Innocent, guileless, humble as children we must become, if we wish to be loved by Christ and received into his kingdom, for he says himself: "Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." —*Matt.* 18: 3. The children, therefore, precede the adults, to teach us that we must adhere to our divine Saviour with filial love and have a childlike, pious heart, especially when we receive communion.

2. Young ladies clothed in white, and wearing wreaths on their heads come after the children. The virginal state is more perfect than the married; and St. John says, it is virgins that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.—*Apoc.* 14: 4. Virgins, therefore, deserve to occupy a prominent place in the procession. Oh, that all who wear white garments and wreaths on their heads would not only appear innocent but be so in reality!

3. The rest of the faithful follow the maidens, the males and then the females. The men with justice precede the women, because in the Church as well as in the world they take precedence. They all go in pairs, arranged according to age and station of life. The procession on Corpus Christi is no idle show, but a public and solemn adoration of Jesus; all the faithful, therefore, should accompany the procession devoutly and in the proper order. Those who cannot do this should at least kneel down when the Most Holy Sacrament is carried by, and adore Jesus with the deepest humility and veneration, and with the most ardent love.

4. Although Christ is really present at the procession, yet a *cross* is borne along, because Jesus Christ suffered and died in order to be able to give himself to us in the Blessed Eucharist. The *banners* signify that as soldiers of Christ we must fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and be prepared to defend our faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist even by the effusion of our blood. The wax-candlet» symbolize the truth that Jesus is the light of the world, who has transplanted us from the darkness of unbelief and sin into the light of faith and holiness, and remind us that we must so let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven.—*Matt.* 5: 15, 16.

5. The custom of erecting *altars* in four places, and stopping at each of them to chant four gospels, and certain prayers, and to give benediction with the Holy Eucharist, in order to obtain the fruits of the earth and to avert various evils, is not prescribed by the Church, but only tolerated. The feast of Corpus Christi is instituted as a feast of honor, that homage and adoration may be paid to Jesus Christ. On other days, on other occasions, and at other processions we may ask Jesus to avert from us everything injurious and to grant us all that is necessary for our temporal and eternal welfare. The custom, however, of erecting altars, there to chant the four gospels and to give benediction has a beautiful signification. The chanting of the four gospels, *i. e.,* the beginning of each, signifies that the four Evangelists give testimony to the Holy Eucharist; for whilst St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke relate its institution, St. John narrates how Christ promised to the Capharnaites and to his disciples that he would give them his flesh to eat and his blood to drink. The four altars at which the priest chants the gospels and gives the sacramental blessing indicate that blessings flow from the Blessed Sacrament to the four regions of the earth, and bring grace and salvation to the faithful of all countries.

6. From the church the procession passes out, and into the church it returns, thereby indicating that the church is the resting place *of* our Lord where he will dwell until the consummation of the world. At the conclusion of the function the two last stanzas of the *Pange lingua* are sung by the choir; after which the priest chants the prayer to the Blessed Sacrament, and gives benediction to the assembled faithful. In giving the benediction the priest says nothing, for the simple reason that it is Christ himself really present in the Holy Eucharist who gives the blessing.

PERORATION.

From the explanation which I have given you of the holy mass and procession of Corpus Christi, you will perceive that this feast is instituted exclusively to honor Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist, To-day direct all your thoughts to your Saviour, present under the species of bread; thank him for the institution of this Sacrament and for the graces which continually flow to you therefrom. If possible, accompany the procession, with veneration, humility and love. I conclude with the prayer of the Church; "O God, who under a wonderful Sacrament has left us a memorial of thy passion; grant us, we beseech thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of thy body and blood that we may ever feel within us the fruit of thy redemption." Amen.

FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

(See also Third Sunday after Pentecost.)

Lesson.—*L·. 12Z* 1-6. I will give thanks to thee, O Lord, foi chou wast angry with me: thy wrath is turned away, and thou has comforted me. Behold, God is my saviour, I will deal confidently, and will not fear: because the Lord is my strength, and my praise, and he is become my salvation. You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains: and you shall say in that day: Praise ye the Lord and call upon his name: make his works known among· the people: remember that his name is high. Sing ye to the Lord, for he has done great things; show this forth in all the earth. Rejoice, and praise, O thou habitation of Sion: for great is he that is in the midst of thee, the Holy One of Israel.

Gospel.—*John* 19: 31-35. At that time: The Jews (because it was the parasceve), that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the sabbath-day (for that was a great sabbath-day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers, therefore, came: and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break hi" legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water. Aud he that saw it hath given testimony; and his testimony is true.

FIRST SKETCH.

THE HEART OF JESUS MOST PERFECT.

Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and Twill refresh you.—Matt. 11: 28.

When we desire to represent a man as being very amiable, we say of him: "He has a good heart, a truly good heart" A good

heart, as soon as it is known as such, begets love. But if we love a good heart in others and feel ourselves compelled, as it were, to give our love to men who have a good heart, can we possibly refuse our love to that most perfect of hearts, our Saviour's? Of him, as neither of angel nor saint, can it be said; To know him is to love him; of him we can say in truth not only that he has a good, a very good Heart, but the most perfect Heart. Our holy mother the Church knowing this has instituted the festival of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and calls upon us to venerate this most holy and adorable heart with the most fervent devotion and love. In order to stimulate you to the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus I shall show you that—

I. The Heart of Jesus when on earth was most perfect.
II. The Heart of Jesus now that he is enthroned in heaven is most perfect.

Part I.

The Heart of Jesus when he sojourned on earth was most perfect in relation to—

i. *His heavenly Father.* He gave evidence of this by valuing the will of his Father above everything and making it his only business on earth. One day when his disciples brought food which they had bought in the city and set it before him, saying: "Rabbi, eat," he gave them this significant answer: "I have meat to eat which you know not of." When his disciples thought that some man had brought him something to eat, Jesus said to them: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work."—*John* 4: 31-34. As a man who is very hungry, thinks of nothing, wishes and seeks nothing else but how to procure food to satiate his hunger, so Jesus thought of nothing, wished and sought for nothing but to do the will of God, his heavenly Father. Why did he come into this world and take upon himself human nature? To fulfil the will of his Father, for when God had decreed to send his Son into the world for the redemption of sinful man he declared himself ready for his mission, saying: "Behold, I come.. that Ishould do thy will, O God."—*Heh.* 10: 7. He lived a life of poverty for thirty-three years, and why? For no other reason than to fulfil the will of his heavenly Father. Therefore, he says himself: "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me."—*John* 5: 38. It was the will of the heavenly Father that he should suffer and die for us, and he was ready for the sacrifice, for, on Holy Thursday, he said to his disciples: "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me

commandment (to suffer and die), so I do: Arise, let us go hence." —*John* 14:31. On Mount Olivet he said to his disciples: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" *(Matt.* 26: 38); in an agony he sweat blood, prayed and sighed: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."—*Matt. 26*; 39. However bitter and terrible the approaching death on the cross appeared to his human nature, he resigned himself to the will of his heavenly Father and desired nothing else than to suffer and die. He suffers himself to be scourged and crowned with thorns, to be buffeted, to be spit upon, to be mocked, to be nailed to the cross, and finally he dies on the cross—and why? To fulfil the will of his heavenly Father. Therefore, the Apostle says of him: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.—*Phil.* 2: 8. If, in referring to a child that readily complies, in every respect, with the commands of his father, we say, "This child has a good heart," must we not with far more reason say the same of Jesus, who from the crib to the cross, fulfilled the will of his heavenly Father so submissively and constantly? How is it in this respect with you? Can it be said that your heart is well-disposed towards God, your heavenly Father? That you may answer this question with benefit to your souls, reflect whether in all the incidents and tribulations of life you recognize the will of God by submitting to them with Christian resignation, and whether in the various duties of your state you seek constantly to fulfil this holy will. You are irritable, consequently easily excited, and in your excitement you say and do many things which are sins. It is the will of God that you subdue this anger and become meek. A sinful familiarity exists between you and a person of the opposite sex. You must discontinue this familiarity. It is the will of God. You have ill-gotten goods in your possession. Restitution must be made. God demands this of you, therefore it is his holy will. You drink to excess, or in other words, you are in the habit of getting drunk, of cursing, blaspheming and of sinning against chastity. These habits you must correct; for such is the will of God. Heretofore you have been careless in prayer, in hearing the Word of God, and in the reception of the sacraments. It is the will of God that you overcome this carelessness in his service and fulfil your religious duties with greater fervor. Examine yourselves as to how you have hitherto complied with the will of God in avoiding evil and doing good, in order to know if you have done the will of God and whether it can be said that you have a good heart.

2. *In relation to men.*

(ai) Sinners. The gospel gives numerous examples of the amiable and merciful conduct of Christ towards sinners. He sat

at table and ate with them that he might instruct and convert them. He announced to Zacheus his intention of becoming his guest, and thus prevailed upon him to make compensation for his usuries by bestowing half of his substance on the poor. By conversing with the sinful Samaritan woman at Jacob's well he showed her and her countrymen the way of salvation. Though surrounded by sanctimonious Scribes and Pharisees, yet he had compassion on the adulteress, and rescued her from their hands, in order that he might free her from her sins. He defended the penitent Mary Magdalene from the uncharitable judgment of the Pharisees, allowed her to anoint his feet and forgave her many sins. He looked so sympathizingly upon Peter, who had denied him three times, that he went out and wept bitterly. He had mercy on the penitent thief on the cross and promised him paradise. Finally, he prayed for sinners on the cross and died for them. O Jesus, what an indescribably good heart was thine towards sinners! (Parables of the lost sheep and the prodigal son. —*Luki* 15: i, *et seqi)*

(£.) Children. His amiable conduct towards children is most touching, and his condescension and friendship for them astonishing. The gospel mentions mothers bringing their children to Jesus that he might lay his hands upon them and bless them, but the disciples, fearing they might be troublesome to him after the fatigue of the day, rebuked them and would not give them access to Jesus. However well-meant this conduct of the Apostles was, Jesus reproved them for it, saying: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come to me ; for the kingdom of heaven is for such."—*Matt.* 19:13-15. "And embracing them, and laying his hands upon them, he blessed them."—*Mark* 10: 16 : At another time Jesus, calling unto him a little child, set him in the midst of them and said : "Amen, I say unto you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* 18: 2, 3. He also manifested his love for children by declaring that he would receive acts of kindness done to little ones as if done to himself. "He that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me."—*Matt.* 18: 5. Hethen pronounced woe against him who should scandalize little children, saying that it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.—*Matt.* 18: 6, 7. Children soon noticed that Jesus loved them; therefore everywhere they ran to him and found great pleasure in being with him. When he repaired to the temple after his solemn entry into Jerusalem the children gathered around him and cried out: "Hosanna to the Son of David." The Scribes and Pharisees being moved with indignation suggested that they should be repelled, but he, defending the children's cause, said ;

"Have you never read: Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise."—*Matt.* 21: 15, 16. Such was the love of Jesus for children.

(c.) *The poor and the sick.* That Jesus had a particular love for the poor and for people in the humble walks of life is evident from his having chosen for his mother an unknown Jewish maiden and the poor carpenter of Galilee for his foster-father; and he himself lived in such poverty that he could say: 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."—*Matt.* 8: 20. He associated very often with poor people and expressly declared that the poor have the gospel preached to them.—*Matt.* 11:5. Did he not work a miracle twice in order to feed the hungry multitude collected about him? And what merciful love did not Jesus show towards the sick, and such as were afflicted with the various infirmities of the bodyl Was there ever any one who implored his help in vain? A man sick of the palsy is brought before him, and at his word he rises, takes up his bed and walks. Another, born blind, is brought, and to him he immediately restores his sight. A woman troubled with an issue of blood touches the hem of his garment and she is instantly healed. Ten lepers beseech him to cure them, and whilst at his command they go to show themselves to the priests, they are cleansed, even the nine who did not think it worth while to return to thank their benefactor. Jesus approaches the city of Naim, whence a dead man is being carried out. The mother weeps. Jesus condoles with her, he has compassion on her and says to her: "Weep not." He then raises her son to life. At the grave of Lazarus, to the astonishment of all present, he himself weeps, and at his powerful word Lazarus comes forth from the grave. Tell me now, had not Jesus a most perfect heart as regards the poor and the sick?

We should imitate this kindheartedness and charity of Jesus, for he says: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also."—*John* 13 : 15. We should have a heart well-disposed towards all men, especially towards sinners, and make efforts to correct them, by giving them a good example and by prayer bringing them to penance. Be on your guard against scandalizing any one by word or deed. Christian parents, be as solicitous as possible that your children grow up in piety and innocence. Be friendly, affable and charitable towards the poor, the sick and the afflicted, for "religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world."—*James* 1: **27.**

Part II.

The Heart of Jesus dwelling in heaven is most perfect. He is not like some men who when they have acquired riches, honor and dignities, are ashamed of their former equals, acquaintances and relatives and will no longer hear of them. In his glory he is as good, friendly and condescending as he was upon earth. Therefore, the Apostle writes: "We have not a high-priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin. Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid."—*Heb.* 4: 15, 16.

1. *Hence what Jesus Christ did for the salvation of mankind upon earthy he still does in heaven.*

(a.) Christ prayed much during his earthly life; he often went to the synagogues and to the temple of Jerusalem. He watched and prayed during whole nights. And for whom did he pray? For us men, that we might appropriate his merits to ourselves and work out our salvation. Do you think Christ prays for us now in heaven? Most assuredly, for St. John plainly asserts this: " My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just."—*I. John* 2: 1. Oh, what happiness! We have not only the saints, the Angels and Mary, the Mother of God, but Christ himself, our Lord and Redeemer, for our Mediator and Advocate with God.

(5.) *Christ taught men.* For three years without any interruption he preached the gospel to high and low, to the learned and illiterate, to friends and enemies. He does so still through his representatives, the bishops and priests. They preach the same doctrine to-day which he preached whilst on earth; by it he leads the Church into all truth through his holy Spirit, and enables her to preserve his doctrine pure and undefiled until the end of the world.

(r.) *Christ forgave sins.* Examples: Mary Magdalene; the man afflicted with palsy; the thief on the cross. Christ does so still. When the priest in the confessional absolves a sinner he does and can do it only by the commission received from Christ; without this power he could not forgive the least venial offense, much less a mortal sin. We owe the grace of the forgiveness of sin to Jesus Christ as much as did those to whom he remitted their sins during his earthly life. We can now obtain the forgiveness of our sins far more easily than the people who lived during the

time of Christ. They had sometimes to travel for days in order to come to Christ, and had frequently to expose themselves to great shame and confusion (Mary Magdalene) when they appeared as sinners before him to obtain the remission of their sins; while we need only go into the confessional and in secret disclose our sins to a priest, in order to be absolved from them.

(c.) *Christ offered himself on the cross for men, to redeem and reconcile them to God.* Christ does this even to the present day. He daily offers himself in the sacrifice of the mass in an unbloody manner in order to apply to us the merits of his bloody sacrifice. Each sacrifice of the mass is of the same infinite value as the sacrifice of the cross, because in the one, as in the other, Jesus Christ is both priest and victim.

(d.) *Christ protected his own and would not permit any harm to befall them.* Even when he was apprehended by his enemies he interested himself about his disciples. In the same manner he even now protects his Church. He has promised that he will remain always with her, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. This promise has been in fulfilment for the last eighteen hundred years; for the Church has already had to endure many persecutions from the mighty enemies who have attacked her, yet she stands immovable, like a rock upon which the waves of a boisterous sea continually break. Come what may, the Church will exist to the end of time, and all the efforts of her enemies to destroy her will prove abortive. Oh, what gratitude do we not owe to our Saviour for being for us now in heaven what he was to men during his earthly career, and how zealously should we not avail ourselves of the means of grace which he offers us!

2. *The Heart of Jesus in heaven is still most perfect—*

(a.) *In relation to sinners.* In St. Paul we have an evident proof of the love which Jesus in heaven shows to sinners. Saul was the most bitter enemy and persecutor of the Christians. He went purposely from Jerusalem to Damascus in search of Christians, men or women, that if he found any, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem: "And as he went on his journey, it came to pass that he drew nigh to Damascus: and suddenly a light from heaven shined round about him, and falling on the ground, he heard a voice saying to him: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said: Who art thou, Lord? And he said: I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. And he, trembling and astonished, said: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" In the meantime Christ ordered a disciple, by name Ananias, to go to Saul and to lay

his hand upon him. Saul is baptized, becomes an Apostle of Christ, who saves not only his own soul but the souls of many Jews and Gentiles.—*Arts* 9. On the day of judgment we shall be attonished when we learn the excess of love which Jesus in heaven shows to sinners, and the superabundance of grace he bestows upon them, in order to win them for heaven

(À) *In relation to children.* Is it not a manifest sign of the love of Jesus for children that immediately after their birth he cleanses them from the stain of original sin, sanctifies them, makes them children of God and heirs of heaven? Is it not also a proof of his love for children that he strictly obliges parents to provide for the temporal and spiritual welfare of their children and to educate them for heaven? And does he not again evince his love for children when he recommends them to the special care of the Church and commands his priests to instruct them in Christian doctrine in church and school, and even directs the bishops to go to them and by the administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation fortify them for the struggle against the enemies of their salvation? And is it not the Association of the Holy Childhood upon which he looks from heaven with a particular pleasure, because the object of it is to save pagan children by the administration of baptism and by providing for their instruction in educational institutions?

(i.) *Finally, in relation to the sick and afflicted.* Great was the number of the sick and of those afflicted with various infirmities of the body whom the Apostles cured by manifest miracles. St. Peter possessed this miraculous gift in so eminent a degree that his shadow falling upon the sick instantly freed them from their infirmities, and of St. Paul we read that his cincture and aprons healed the sick upon whom they were laid. Innumerable are the miracles which the saints of the Catholic Church have wrought at all times. But from whom did the Apostles and saiuts receive the power to work such miracles? From Jesus Christ, for the Apostles and saints could work miracles only in the name of Jesus. The deep interest which Jesus manifests for the poor, the sick and the afflicted of what kind soever is evident from the promises which he has made to those who perform works of mercy, as well as from the graces with which he usually rewards such works even on earth. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."—*Matt.* 5: 7.

PERORATION.

Jesus had the most perfect of hearts on earth, and still has it in heaven. Therefore, have confidence in him and bring all your necessities before his throne of grace with the greatest confidence. Ask him especially for those spiritual benefits which you need for the salvation of your soul; importune him for a true contrition for your sins and the forgiveness of them, for strength to overcome all temptations, for persevering zeal in virtue, for an exact fulfilment of the duties of religion and of your state of life, as well as for final perseverance in his love and grace. He will most assuredly confer these blessings upon you if you have a fervent desire for them and do what is required on your part to obtain them. Ask him likewise for all that you need for your temporal welfare, health, etc., and for his blessing upon your undertakings; he will grant all your requests, as far as it is necessary, good and expedient for you; for he himself puts this petition in your heart and on your lips, "Give us this day our daily bread." Keep your heart free from all sinful inclinations and desires, especially from all impurity, that your heart may be conformable to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and his words ba verified in you: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. —*Matt.* 5 j 8.

SECOND SKETCH.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PICTURE OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

My delights are to be with the children ofmen,—Prov. 8:31.

Sister Mary Margaret Alacoque, whilst one day kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, praying with the greatest fervor and devotion, beheld a wonderful apparition; she saw in a vision Jesus, who showed her the picture of his Sacred Heart. From the interior of this heart great flames of fire came forth which spread in every direction, as if to ignite all with which they could come in contact; but the exterior of this heart was encircled by a crown of thorns which seemed to wound it most painfully. . It is because of this wonderful vision that the Heart of Jesus is usually represented with flames of fire ascending

from it, and encircled by a crown of thorns. This representation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus will be to-day the subject of our meditation.

I shall speak—

I Of the flumes of fire, which come from the Heart of Jesus, and which tell us how much Christ loves us in the Blessed Sacrament.

IL Of the thorns which surround the Heart of Jesus, and which represent to us the contumelies which Jesus endures in the Blessed Sacrament.

Part I.

Fire and especially the flames of fire are generally admitted to be symbols of love, and are referred to as such in the Sacred Scripture. Thus we read in the Canticle of Canticles: "Love is strong as death, the lamps thereof are fire and flames."—8: 6. And Christ says: "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?'—*Luke* 12: 49. This fire which through the Holy Ghost is sent on the earth is the love with which the hearts of all men should be inflamed. When in the picture we see flames of fire issuing from the Heart of Jesus, it indicates the love which he specially manifests for us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. This love is—

1. *Indescribably great.* If we love a person very much we always desire to be with him. We undertake long journeys in order to visit a kind friend and deem ourselves happy to converse with him. In fact, if it be possible, we like to make our abode where he resides. A child that is used to its mother always calls for her, wants to be with her, and is nowhere so contented as in its mother's arms. In such a way the love of Jesus for us manifests itself. It was the will of his heavenly Father that after the accomplishment of the work of redemption he should as man leave the earth and enter heaven. Now what did Christ do that he might remain with us not only as God but also as man after his Ascension into heaven? He did that which only *his* love could suggest and invent by the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. He is, as faith teaches us, really present in this Sacrament both as God and man, in the very same manner as when he once walked on earth, and as he now sits in heaven at the right hand of God. We, therefore, enjoy the same grace as the people did at the time when Christ lived upon earth; we are even favored as highly as the saints in heaven who behold him face to face. How much, and to what in excess does Jesus love us? What more shall I say in order to give you a correct idea of the love

of Jesus for men? He is not content with visiting us sometimes and making us happy by his presence, he not only comes down upon our altars during holy mass, but he lives among us without interruption, for he is really present in our tabernacles under the form of bread. It is a well-known fact that when we love any one sincerely we wish him to visit us often, and it would grieve us should he not call on us when time and opportunity permit him to do so. It is not thus with Jesus; he remains with us always, day and night, and although he continually thinks of us and unceasingly does us good, yet he does not require us to remain with him always; he is satisfied if we visit him when we can conveniently do so, as in the afternoons of Sundays and holidays. Ah, my Jesus, how much thou lovest men! Yet more; the love of Jesus for us also causes him to humble himself to a depth so profound that it is impossible for him to humble himself more. During his life upon earth be concealed his Godhead and appeared as man, and as a poor man. This certainly was a great humiliation, infinitely greater than if an emperor or king were to clothe himself as a laborer and live in a hovel. But how does he appear in the Blessed Sacrament? He does not even appear as man, or in the form of a servant, but under the appearance of a little bread; consequently one might believe him to be without life and without feeling; but as certain as it is that there is a sun in the spacious firmament above us, so certain is it that the consecrated host, which looks like bread, is the true, living God-man, Jesus Christ, endowed with all divine perfections. What a wonderful, incomprehensible humiliation! And why has Jesus humbled himself so profoundly? Through an excess of love for us. Were he to manifest himself in his glory we could not endure the sight of the splendor of his majesty, nor should we dare to appear before him, and were he to appear as an ordinary man in the Blessed Sacrament, we should be deprived of the most wonderful grace, for we could not receive him in holy communion. How great is the love of Jesus for us? When our divine Saviour became man for the redemption of a sinful world, he remained thirty-three years upon earth. This certainly was a great proof of his love for men. But how long does Christ remain upon earth in the Blessed Sacrament? Perhaps a few years longer, or at most a few centuries? Ah, no, he remains upon earth until the end of time. In the Blessed Sacrament he has literally fulfilled what he said to his Apostles: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." —*Matt.* 28: 20.

2. *Active.* The whole life of Christ upon earth was a continual bestowal of graces and benefits; "He went about doing good."—*Acts* 10: 38. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is the

same God of love, the same benefactor, and giver of graces that he was in the days of his earthly life.

(a.) His permanent presence is most beneficial. From this Sacrament he perpetually cries out to us, as he formerly did to his contemporaries: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—*Matt.* 11: 28. Joseph of Egypt deemed himself happy when God by his grace descended into his prison in order to console him. "She went down with him into the pit. And in bands she left him not."— 10: 13, 14. "But," says St. Alphonsus, "how much happier are we, since in this miserable life we have our incarnate Lord and God continually with us, who by his real presence assists us in life with such ineffable love and mercy." In whatever difficulty we may be, if we pray to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with devotion, humility and cenfidence, we may rest assured that we shall be heard. Here Jesus sits on his throne of grace and his heart desires nothing more ardently than that we come very often to him and ask many graces of him; moreover, the oftener we approach him with our petitions the more welcome we are to him, and the more abundantly he bestows upon us the gifts of his mildness and mercy. If we need light in doubtful affairs Jesus gives it to us; if we need consolation in our sufferings Jesus gives it to us; if we need strength in our temptations Jesus gives it to us; in short, all things whatsoever we ask of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament we obtain if they are good and expedient for us. For this reason St. Bonaventure compares the Blessed Sacrament to Mount Galaad, on which aromatic balsam is found in abundance, since in this Sacrament the most powerful remedies are offered to us for all our temporal and spiritual necessities. The saints were well aware of this; hence in all their needs they had recourse to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and recommended themselves and their fellow-men to his protection and grace.

(Æ.) But Jesus undoubtedly gives us more graces in the Blessed Sacrament when we really receive it. We read of Jonathan, the son of king Saul, that his soul was knit with the soul of David, and that he loved him as his own soul. In token of his love Jonathan stripped himself of the coat with which he was clothed and gave it to David, and the rest of his garments, even to his sword and to his bow, and to his girdle.—*1. Kings* 18: 1-4. Jonathan gave David all he had, so great was his love for him. What does Jesus give us in holy communion? Infinitely more than generous hearted Jonathan gave to his friend David; more than the whole world can bestow upon us. He gives us his sacred humanity, namely, his most holy body and his most holy soul; still more, he gives us his Divinity with its infinite perfections, he gives us all the merits

which during his earthly career he acquired for himself; in a word, he gives himself to us, with all that he is and has. Could our divine Saviour give us more? Was not St. Ambrose right when full of astonishment he exclaimed: "How could Jesus love us more than to give himself to be our food ?"

3. *Universal,* for it extends to all men, especially—

(a.) To the poor. As a rule only the great ones of this would have access to the palaces of princes and are invited to royal banquets. Oh, how much more expansive is the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! Before him not only the rich and the great ones, not only the learned and gifted, but even the poorest and most ordinary people are allowed to approach; indeed the latter are the very ones whom he exceedingly loves to see with him. If you come to him clothed in coarse garments you do not offend him; if in sickness you call him into a dark, smoky chamber, which is in appearance no better than the stable of Bethlehem, you offend him not; in fact, if you are the most despised and forsaken person in the world, and come to him, you will be as welcome and as dear to him as a king or an emperor. Oh, what a comfort this is for poor, despised persons.

(Æ.) *Even to sinners.* How amiably Jesus received Mary Magdalene and other repentant sinners, how gracious was his conduct towards them, how mercifully he forgave them! Jesus still manifests to this day the same love for sinners in the Sacrament of the Altar. If they only repent of their sins from their heart and are earnestly resolved to do penance and amend their lives, he turns to them full of love and mercy, and receives them as it were with open arms, as the father in the gospel received his prodigal son. Oh, if sinners would visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and in his adorable presence sincerely repent of their transgressions and implore his grace and forgiveness, rest assured he would bestow upon them great and even extraordinary graces, with the help of which it would not be difficult for them to break the chains of their sins and obtain the liberty of the children of God. So great is the love of Jesus for us in this Sacrament of Love.

Part II.

Blessed Margaret saw the Sacred Heart of Jesus encircled by a crown of thorns which wounded it in several places. This is a figure of the numerous offenses which are offered to our divine Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament. Who are those who press sharp thorns into the Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament?

1. *Those who do not believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament,* and who, instead of reverently and humbly adoring his love in this wonderful mystery, declare him to be, as it were, a liar, when he says: "This is my body, this is my blood." And the number is great of those who deny the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, the Gentiles, the Jews, the Mohametans, and even millions calling themselves Christians. They absolutely and positively deny that Jesus Christ is present under the appearance of bread, and assert that the host is nothing else than bread. Consequently they do not adore the holy Sacrament of the Altar, they even find fault with us Catholics because we adore it, and accuse us of idolatry, because, as they say, we adore bread. How much must our divine Saviour be offended by such Christians; though repeated so often and pronounced with the greatest emphasis, yet they refuse to believe his words and endeavor to make his adorers waver in their faith and to lead them into error.

2. *Those who communicate unworthily.* Of such the Apostle says: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord" (Z *Cor.* 11: 27); that is, he is as guilty as if he had slain the Lord and shed his blood. If, according to the words of the Apostle, every mortal sin is a crucifixion of Christ, since it could only be atoned for by the death of Christ on the cross, how much more will a sacrilegious communion be such a crucifixion, since it is one of the very greatest and most grievous of sinsl St. Augustine remarks: "The Jews who crucified our Saviour did not offend his Divinity, but only his humanity; they murdered him by inflicting many tortures, but only in the mortal flesh, whereas Christians who receive communion unworthily offend his Divinity itself; they tear him, as it were, from the throne of his glory and subject him to new torments; they compel him to allow himself to be again loaded with ignominy and reproach; his glorious flesh, which should never more see death, they again fasten to the cross in the most cruel manner." "Ah! ye godless wretches," he cries out to unworthy communicants, who are far greater profaners of the Most Holy than were the Jews and the executioners, "ye are a thousand times more cruel and savage than they!" Oh, that there may be none among us upon whose soul rests the awful sin of an unworthy communion! Oh, that those who know themselves guilty of this sin may do earnest and lasting penance that they may yet find grace before he judgment-seat of God!

3. *Those who behave irreverently before the Blessed Sacrament;* those who in church or in the vicinity of the Blessed Sacrament behave frivolously and look around instead of praying, who yield to every distraction, and ever, to sinful thoughts, laugh, talk,

and gaze about. Our Lord's conduct towards the greatest sinners was indulgent and merciful, but not towards those who profaned the temple of Jerusalem with their mercantile affairs and money-changing; he was fired with a holy anger against them, upset their tables, scattered their money, and drove them out of the temple, saying: "My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves."—*Matt. 21:* 13. Now when Jesus became angry with the profaners of the Jewish temple, in which was only the ark of the covenant, how will he proceed against those Christians who misconduct themselves in our churches where he is really present? There are various reasons assigned why God condemned the apostate angels without mercy. But St. Bernard gives a reason which should terrify every one who behaves irreverently in church. He says the apostate angels were condemned without mercy because they sinned in a place where everything breathed sanctity, and at a time when all good angels were adoring God. Are not Christians who behave irreverently in church like apostate angels? Do they not sin in a holy place, in the church, and at a time when the good and pious are adoring God? Have they not reason to fear that like the apostate angels they will be rejected by God? Reflect well on this and behave reverently before the Blessed Sacrament. See to it, Catholic parents, that your children are devout and reverent in church, and reprove and punish them if they misbehave.

4. *Those who are cold and indifferent towards Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament;* who do not visit him throughout the year, who on Sundays and holidays, instead of adoring him for a short time in the Blessed Sacrament, spend the whole afternoon in diversions; to whom a quarter of an hour before the Blessed Sacrament is too long, and who experience ennui and weariness nowhere except in church. Such Catholics give full evidence that they have no love at all for Jesus, and that their thoughts are inclined to things of earth. Judge for yourselves if the conduct of such persons must not deeply grieve and pain our divine Saviour. He is all love for us; he loves us so much that even after his Ascension he wished to remain, and does remain with us as God and man, in order to do good to us and to give himself entirely to us in holy communion. If for all this love we make no return by endeavoring to influence our hearts with love for him, are we not ungrateful? and is it not a grievous offense against him? Repent of your carelessness and neglect in visiting him heretofore; ask his pardon and resolve for the future to visit and to adore him as often as possible.

5. *Finally, those who seldom go to communion, and who irnnr diately after receiving communion leave the church.* There **are**

Catholics who for years do not go to confession and communion. Still greater is the number of those who go only once a year, about Easter, and then more from compulsion than of their own free will, because by the neglect of their Easter duty they would expose themselves to much that is unpleasant. It is greatly to be feared that such persons confess and communicate unworthily and load their conscience with a double sacrilege, for the good disposition and preparation necessary for the worthy reception of the sacraments are wanting to them. But even suppose that they do not confess and communicate unworthily, their sloth and negligence in making use of the means of salvation, which in his love he has prepared for them, must deeply wound the loving Heart of our divine Saviour. And how do such lukewarm persons act after communion? Do they prolong their thanksgiving? Do they adore Jesus, who now dwells in their hearts, with the most profound reverence? Do they return him thanks for the superabundant grace he has bestowed upon them in coming to visit them? Do they promise to love him sincerely? Do they make good resolutions to serve him in the future with fidelity? Do they fervently ask for those graces which they need for the sanctification of their life and for perseverance in good? Alasl no, they do nothing of all this; they are as cold after communion as before, they again yield to distractions, scarcely say even a lukewarm, spiritless prayer, and five minutes hardly elapse before they hasten from the church and live as sinfully as before. How can Jesus be pleased with such communicants? Must it not be very painful to him when Catholics are so ungrateful for the inexpressible grace of communion, and treat him with so much contempt?

peroration.

There are very many Christians who wreathe a crown of thorns around the heart of Jesus, *i.* who grievously offend him in the Blessed Sacrament. Alas! we, too, must confess that more or less we have grieved and offended our divine Saviour in this Sacrament of Love. Let us humbly and contritely beg pardon, make acts of love, and say with heart and lips: Jesus, my love! Let us repeat this ejaculation in every temptation, in all our undertakings and affairs, in all our good works and at every sacrifice we make for the glory of God. Thus we shall live and die in the consoling hope that our heart will rest in eternal felicity with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Amen.

THIRD SKETCH.

THE WOUND OF THE SACRED HEART.

One of the soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water.—John 19: 34.

St. Gertrude once asked St. John who appeared to her in a vision, why he had written nothing about the Sacred Heart of Jesus, on whose bosom he reposed at the Last Supper. His answer was: "I was commissioned to preach the gospel of the Man-God to the Infant Church: it is reserved to later times to have the treasures of the Sacred Heart of Jesus fully opened and revealed, when faith shall have grown languid and charity cold"; and thus it came to pass. The public and general devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was introduced into the Church in the seventeenth century chiefly through Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, of the Visitation Order at Paray-le-Monial, in France. In a vision she saw the Heart of Jesus surrounded with flames, surmounted by a cross, encircled by a crown of thorns, and pierced with a gaping wound. Pointing to his Heart, our Lord commanded her to introduce and spread among men the devotion to his Sacred Heart, that the treasures of heaven might be showered upon the world. She obeyed with all the enthusiasm of her soul, and before her death had the happiness of seeing this devotion introduced into every diocese of France. It is now the most cherished devotion throughout the Church, and in order to promote it, Pope Pius IX, by a decree of August 23, 1856, extended to all Christendom a special feast in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, fixing the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi for its celebration. In order to contribute my share towards promoting this beautiful devotion I shall speak to-day of the wound of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This wound is broad and deep and from it flowed blood and water. But besides this visible wound the Heart of Jesus is pierced by an invisible one, which is far more painful than the visible one. Let us contemplate to-day—

I. The visible, and
II. The invisible wound of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Part I.

The visible wound was inflicted upon the Heart of Jesus by a soldier with a spear. In the Passion as related by St. John we

read: *Then the Jews, because it was the parasceve, that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day {for that was a great sabbath-day}, besought Pilate, that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. The soldiers, therefore, came: and they broke the legs of the first and of the other that was crucified with him. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he that saw it, gave testimony; and his testimony is true. And he knoweth that he saith true; that you also may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture might be fulfilled; You shall not break a bone of him. And again another Scripture saith: They shall look on him whom they pierced.—John* 19: 31-37. This visible wound of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a great mystery of love. Love is known not so much by words as by works, and the sacrifices which it makes for the object of its affection. Hence St. John says: "My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth."—*I. John* 3: 18. Great must have been Jacob's love for Rachel, causing him to sacrifice fourteen years of labor and service for her. Great must have been the love of Jonathan for David, since for him he sacrificed his royal diadem. But the love of Jesus for us! Look up to the cross and contemplate the wound in the side of your Lord; behold how blood and water issue from it! What a sacrifice! It is the last he makes for the human race, the complement of all the sacrifices of a life of thirty-three years of labor and fatigue. Here you have a mystery of love, such as the world has never seen, and will never see again. He became poor that he might enrich us, he humbled himself that he might exalt us, he died for us that we might live. "Greater love than this no one hath, that a man lay down his life *for his friends" {John* 15: 13); it is the height of love to die *for one's enemies,* as Jesus did. Being enemies to God we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son. Now you will also understand the words of St. Paul: "Christ loved me and delivered himself for me" (Gal. 2: 20), as a gift and a sacrifice, and the words of St. John: "Having loved his own he loved them unto the end."—*Chap.* 13: 1.

The application of this mystery of love is easy; it readily forces itself upon us and tells us that as the Sacred Heart of Jesus is all love, all tenderness for us, we must give him our undivided love, our whole heart, which he demands when he says: "Son, give me thy heart." Let us, therefore, love him with all our heart. For the love of Jesus sacrifice, as he has done, everything, even the last drop of your heart's blood, if it should be demanded. Give the love of God the first and principal place

in your heart, renounce and abjure every other love that is in-compatible with the love of God.

The wound of the Sacred Heart of Jesus contains not only a *mystery of love, but also of grace. ll One of the soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water."* The Evangelist makes use of a very appropriate term. He does not say he *pierced* through or *wounded* his side, but *opened* it, in order to signify, as it were, that then the *fountain of life* was opened out of which flow the life-giving sacraments, without which no one can enter into that life which is the true life. The blood which was shed was shed unto the remission of sins; the water is mingled with the chalice of salvation and contains for us laver and drink. The opening of the side signifies the door at the side of Noe's ark, through which entered the animals that were to be saved from the deluge. The ark is a figure of the Church. Jesus burned with love for us from all eternity; in his Heart was inclosed an ocean of grace for the redemption and salvation of mankind. This *boundless* treasure of grace was opened with a spear and imn ediately there came out blood and water, the blood signifying tne sacraments in general, but the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist in particular, in which the body and blood of Christ are given to us for the nourishment of our soul. The water signifies the Sacrament of Baptism, for in this sacrament through water and the word of life we are regenerated unto life everlasting.

The second mystery which we see in the wound of the side of Jesus is the beginning and origin of the Church. It was the door of Noe's ark, through which the animals entered that were saved; the Church is the ark in which *alone* we can be saved, whilst everything around it is tossed about and lost on the billowy seas of human ignorance and error. As from the side of the sleeping Adam, Eve, the mother of the living, was formed, and by God himself wedded to Adam as his lawful wife, so out of the side of Christ, slumbering in death, the Church, the mother of the faithful, came forth and was wedded to Christ by his heavenly Father as his bride without spot or blemish. Behold the mystery of the wounded Heart of Jesus! We are children of this true and only saving Church, into which we have entered by baptism, and in which we are nourished with the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, the Shepherd of our souls. As often, therefore, as you see an image of our Crucified Love, think of the wound of his side, reflect on the great mystery which it represents, and thank God for the great graces which flow therefrom, namely, the foundation and establishment of the Church nearly nineteen hundred years ago and the institution of the holy sacraments, especially of baptism and the Blessed Eucharist.

Part II.

The invisible wound is inflicted on the Sacred Heart of Jesus by man, that is, by every grievous sin he commits. Allow me to remind you of a remarkable passage in the epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews: "It is impossible forthose who wereonceilluminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have moreover tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance, crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making him a mockery."—6: 4-6. True, St. Paul here speaks of those who fall away from the faith; they crucify again the Son of God and make a mockery of him; in a wider sense all those are meant who commit a mortal sin, for they crucify Christ again and make a mockery of him. This being pre-supposed, let us consider the invisible wound which he who commits a mortal sin inflicts on the loving, tender Heart of Jesus.

I. In the first place let us consider the *malice* of such a sinner. It is certain beyond doubt that each mortal sin is an act of incomprehensible malice, for every mortal sin is a rebellion of the creature against the Creator, a rejection of his holy law, a black ingratitude against so good a God; now if we consider mortal sin in this light with reference to Christ, its malice appears rather greater than less, for by mortal sin man inflicts a broad and deep wound upon the loving Heart of Jesus, and from the cross Christ cries out to every sinner: *Thou hast mounded my Heart—Cant.* 4: 9. Thou hast wounded my Heart, he cries out to *the vindictive* who refuse to forgive injuries and offenses, who meditate revenge and will not be reconciled. Thou hast wounded my Heart, he says to *the unjust man* who stretches out his hands after unjust goods, who by theft, lying, cheating, or any kind of injustice, increases his worldly substance. Thou hast wounded my Heart, he exclaims to *parents* who neglect the care of those under their charge and who by evil words and bad example cause their own ruin and that of their children. Thou hast wounded my Heart, he exclaims from the cross to *all sons and daughters,* who do not obey their parents, who grieve them by their bad conduct and thus embitter their days. Thou hast wounded my Heart, he cries out to *every one mho knowingly arid purposely transgresses and violates the lam of God or a precept of the Church.*

2. Let us consider the *pain* which the Heart of Jesus suffers on acount of the wound. The opening of his side and the transfixion

of his heart by the spear of the soldier caused no *pain* to our divine Saviour, for we read: *After they were come to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side.* This wound was inflicted after he was dead, therefore he experienced no pain But the case is different with the wound which the sinner causes; this gives the Heart of Jesus great pain. How could it be otherwise, for this wound is inflicted by his own children, whom he loves most tenderly, for whom he endured every kind of hardship for thirty-three years, for whom he watched and prayed whole nights, for whom he suffered and died; from his own children, upon whom he lavishes the treasures of his graces, whom he protects and blesses, whom he has made heirs of his kingdom, and whom he has invited to the heavenly marriage feast. With justice therefore he complains: If an enemy had done this, I would have endured it, and if he who hated me had spoken great things against me, I might have hid myself from him; but that my friend, who has tasted sweet things together; that my child whom I have caried on my heart and to whom I have revealed its secrets, and for whom I have shed my blood, oh! what a pain! Remember, my friend, the day will come when that sweet Jesus, who is your Redeemer, will be your Judge. You will have to appear before him whose Heart you now so often and so cruelly pierce, and then you will see as clearly as if it were written in the beams of the sun what immense guilt you have heaped up for the day of judgment, a guilt which cannot be cancelled for all eternity. What will be your feelings and your sentiments when your God and Saviour, as your Judge, shall say to you: Depart from my Heart, whose love you have despised, whose graces you have abused, depart from me into everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his associates. You will then call on the mountains to fall upon you, and the hills to cover you. But then it will be too late, too late for ever.

PERORATION.

Let us now have recourse to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Do you not see how it bleeds, and how it is open to receive you? This blood is the price of our redemption, it cleanses us from all sin. This door leads into the sanctuary of his divine Heart, that you may there find forgiveness and peace. Bewail your sins at the foot of the cross, confess them candidly, sincerely and with a firm resolution of amendment, and then seek refuge in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the asylum of peace and of every grace and blessing. Amen.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

Lesson.—*Ecclus. 24.* 11-20. In all things I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord. Then the creator of all things commanded and said to me: and he that made me rested in my tabernacle. And he said to me: Let thy dwelling be in Jacob, and thy inheritance in Israel, and take root in my elect. And so was I established in Sion, and in the holy city likewise I rested: and my power was in Jerusalem. And I took root in an honorable people, and in the portion of my God his inheritance, and my abode is in the full assembly of saints. I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress-tree on Mount Sion. I was exalted like a palm-tree in Cades, and as a rose-plant in Jericho. As a fair olive-tree in the plains, and as a plane tree by the waters in the streets was I exalted. I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aromatic balm. I yielded a sweet odor like the best myrrh.

Gospel.—*Luke* 10: 38-42. At that time: Jesus entered into a certain town: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who, sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard his word. But Martha was busy about much serving; who stood, and said, Lord, hast thou nc care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? speak to her, therefore, that she help me. And the Lord answering said to her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.

FIRST SKETCH.

THE HAPPY DEATH OF MARY

Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away Prom her.—Luke 10: 42.

Which is the best part for which we should strive continually? Is it for money and earthly possessions, joy and pleasure, honor

and reputation? No; such things do not deserve to be called the best part, because they make no one perfectly contented and happy, are of short duration, and often abandon us, if not in life, certainly at the hour of death. The best part which we must choose is a good, happy death; for it frees us for ever from all the tribulations of this life, and places us in possession of the perfect and everlasting joy of heaven. Therefore, the Holy Ghost says: "Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow them."—*Afoc.* 14: 13. Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, chose the best part on this day, for she then exchanged her mortal life for that which is immortal; on this day it she entered the mansion of the heavenly Jerusalem, where she reigns as Queen of the angels and saints in everlasting glory. This best part which Mary chose shall be the subject of our meditation this morning. I call the death of **Mary** happy—

I. On account of what she leaves, and
***II** On account of what she receives.*

Part I.

Mary's death must be called happy on account of what she leaves:

i. *A life of pain and tribulation.*

(λ.) As it is true that royal blood flows in her veins, she could justly claim the highest nobility. She was a descendant of the royal house of David, which, at one time, was most renowned and opulent, but at the time of Mary its splendor had departed; the descendants of David, deprived of their throne, lived in poverty and lowliness. Mary, the royal daughter, is not espoused to a prince, but to Joseph, a poor carpenter; she does not dwell in the royal palace at Jerusalem, but in a humble cottage at Nazareth; she has no income, but earns a poor livelihood by the work of her hands. When the hour arrives in which she is to become a Mother she is refused admittance into any of the houses of Bethlehem; deprived of all human assistance and in the greatest need she is compelled to seek shelter in a stable, and lay her new-born babe in a manger. What poverty! what abandonment! Is there a poor man in this congregation who could say that he is more abandoned and deserted than Mary was?

(λ) It is true, Mary did not shed her blood for the faith, as did the Apostles and millions of Christians; still we call her the Queen of Martyrs on account of the great bodily and mental sufferings which she endured for the sake of her divine Son. What fl usthave been her feelings when she brought forth Jesus, whom she knew to be the Son of God, in such poverty, being unable to satisfy even his most necessary wants! What anguish must have seized her when she learned that Herod was seeking the life of the Child, and how great must have been the tribulations and and perils to which she was exposed in her flight into Egypt and during her sojourn in that pagan country! How keenly she must have suffered, knowing that Jesus, who was so kindly disposed towards men and gave the most admirable proofs of his love, was everywhere misunderstood, misrepresented, calumniated, insulted, mocked at, persecuted and threatened with death! Who can describe her sorrow and grief when she saw her dear Son, for whose rescue she would joyfully have sacrificed a thousand lives, suffer and die on an ignominious gibbet, in such ineffable pain and ignominy? Ah, then it was that the prophetic words of Simeon were fulfilled: "Thy own soul a sword shall pierce."—*Luke 2'.^.* But what Mary suffered on Good Friday while standing beneath the cross of her Son, she daily and hourly suffered during her whole maternal life. She knew from the predictions of the prophets, and without doubt by a special revelation from God, that Christ would suffer and die, as also the circumstances attending his passion and death. As often as she looked at him, as often as she heard his voice, a sword of grief pierced her heart. She could say with her ancestor, David: "My life is wasted with grief: and my years in sighs."—*Ps.* 30: 11. What wonder, then, that Mary looked forward to the hour of her dissolution with the greatest desire, experiencing the greatest happiness when the moment of departure came. As a captive leaves his prison, so she left this valley of tears and joyously hastened to the blessed liberty of the children of God.

2. *A life spent in the greatest innocence and holiness.*

(a.) Mary standing on the threshold of eternity can say to-day with far greater justice than David could: "I have walked in my innocence."—*Ps.* 25: 1. For not the least stain adhered to her angelically pure soul. She never during her whole life committed even a venial sin; the grace with which God had adorned her in the very first instant of her conception she preserved inviolably to her last breath. Therefore the Church applies to her the words of the Canticle: "Thou art all fair, O my love; and there is not a spot in thee."—*Cant.* 4: 7.

(i.) Mary is not only free from every stain of sin, but is also adorned with every virtue. Whatever virtue we may select, we

see it most perfectly exemplified in Mary. How great was her *humility!* Although raised by God above all the angels and saints, and chosen to be the mother of his Son, yet she remains little in her own eyes, calls herself the handmaid of the Lord, gives glory to God, and says: "My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour . . . for he hath done great things to me."—*Luke* i: 46, 47, 49. How great was *her love for her neighbor!* She has the most tender compassion for the afflicted; as exemplified in her conduct at the marriage of Cana, she renders assistance without waiting to be asked. Yes, it is her love for man that makes her consent to the death of her dearly-beloved Son, and offer him to the heavenly Father for the redemption of the sinful world. How great was *her love of chastity!* She esteems this virtue so highly that she will not accept the dignity of the divine Maternity if she cannot obtain it otherwise than by the loss of her virginity. How great was *her meekness and patience!* She suffers the greatest agony at the foot of the cross of her Son, a sword of sorrow pierces her soul, yet not a word of complaint escapes her lips; she stands there silently and blesses the murderers of her Son! In a word, Mary is to us a model of every virtue and a mirror of justice.

(c.) How eas'" and sweet must it be to die after such an angelic life! When St. Lawrence Justinian on his death-bed saw his domestics in tears, he said to them: "If you wish to weep, go away, for if you desire to remain with me you must rejoice, as I also rejoice, for the gate of heaven is at last opened to me, so that I may be united with my God." In like manner, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Aloysius and many other saints experienced great joy when they were informed of the near approach of death. Now if the saints, who with all their great virtues were nevertheless conscious of some defects, died cheerfully and happily, what ineffable consolation must not Mary have experienced at her departure, since her whole life was spent in the service of God. We also shall one day die happily if we can assure ourselves that we have lived piously and served God faithfully. Let us therefore take Mary for our model, and be solicitous to lead an unsullied, virtuous life, so that we may one day depart fro fl this world in peace, consoled and comforted,

Part II.

Mary's death is blessed on account of what she receives.

1. *The joys of heaven.*

(a.) St. Catherine of Siena being one day in an ecstasy, our Lord sent her a ray of heavenly glory. Having come to herself again she exclaimed: "I have seen wonders." When pressed to relate what she had seen, she replied: "I should commit a great fault if I attempted to describe what I have seen, for human words cannot express the value and beauty of the treasures of heaven." The saint was right; the joys of heaven are so great that no human understanding can comprehend and no human tongue express them, as the Apostle says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love him."—*I. Cor. 2*: 9. What are all the joys and pleasures which men have ever enjoyed or will enjoy in comparison with the joys of heaven? A grain of sand compared to the globe of the earth, a dew-drop to the unmeasurable and interminable sea—a mere nothing. In heaven there is nothing that could in the least sadden us. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow, shall be any more, for the former things are passed away."—*Ajoc.* 21:4. There will be nothing but joys that fully satiate, we shall have all that heart can desire and we shall exclaim: "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" This superabundance of felicity will last without interruption for evermore. It is this eternity that makes heaven what it is.

(5.) This heaven with its unspeakable joys is now being opened to the Blessed Virgin. She is lying on her death-bed the flame of divine love has consumed her vital strength; only a little while and she will exchange this valley of tears for the heavenly Jerusalem. Oh, who can describe the consolation her heart experiences in this hour? How she rejoices that her end is so near and that she is to be eternally rewarded for her zeal in the service of God! With what delight she looks up to Jesus, who cries out to her in love-inspiring words: "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come."—*Cant. 2:* 10. What a blessed death!

2. *The joys of heaven in the most abundant measure.*

(a.) The world has never beheld so great a saint as the blessed Mother of God and never will in the ages yet to come. She served God from the earliest days of her childhood with the greatest fidelity, and during her whole life there was not a moment which she did not devote to the practice of virtue. True, the saints observed all the commandments of God and were desirous to acquire all virtues; but it was only in one or other thereof that they particularly excelled, whereas Mary, because

of her fulness of grace, practiced all the virtues at the same time and attained in each the highest degree of perfection. "She was," says St. Alphonsus, "an Apostle for the Apostles; she was a queen of martyrs, because she had to suffer more than all the martyrs together; she stood at the head of the virgins; she was an example to the married; she united the most perfect innocence with the most complete mortification, and in her heart were found clustered the most heroic virtues that ever a saint practiced on earth. Because in her all the graces, prerogatives and merits of the saints were united, the Sacred Scripture says of her: "The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety."—A. 44: 10.

(£.) Since Mary transcends all the elect by her virtue and sanctity, God has rewarded her more than them, for "he who soweth in blessing shall also reap blessings."—*II. Cor.* 9 : 6. Mary is the Queen of Heaven and enjoys a far greater measure of beatitude than all the angels and saints. "As at the rising of the sun the light of the stars and of the moon entirely disappears, so Mary obscures the splendor of the angels and saints in heaven to such an extent that we scarcely notice them."—*St. Peter Dam.* Mary on this day on her death-bed can exclaim with greater ecstasy and joy than previously: "My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."—*Luke* 1: 46-48. To-day she enters into the joys of heaven and reigns there as Queen of angels and saints for all eternity. There is now no nation on earth that does not call Mary blessed, and wherever Christ is adored Mary is also venerated. Millions of Christians daily and hourly salute her as the Mother of Grace, as blessed among women, begging her protection and intercession in life and in death.

PERORATION.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad because of this wonderful exaltation of the Blessed Virgin, and be solicitous that you may one day die a good, a blessed death. Above all, shun sin, for "the death of the wicked is very evil."—*Ps.* 33: 22. If you have sinned, reconcile yourselves to God by a good, contrite confession, and henceforth bring forth fruits worthy of penance. Be fervent in prayer, for you know that "whatsoever good thing any man shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord."—*Ephes.* 6 : 8. Frequently reflect upon the unspeakable joys which are prepared for you in heaven. This will convince you more and more of the vanity of all earthly things, strengthen you in the

hour of temptation, and keep alive your zeal for virtue. Labor, combat and suffer for heaven as did Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, for heaven is worth it all. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

THE BEST PART WHICH MARY HAS CHOSEN.

Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.—Luke 10: 42.

The Church annually celebrates two ascensions: the Ascension of Christ and the Ascension of Mary. Between these two ascensions, however, there is a great difference, for Jesus Christ ascended into heaven by his own power, whereas Mary, his mother, was assumed into heaven by the power of God, for which reason we do not call the feast of this day the ascension, but the Assumption of Mary. This festival embraces two events: the death of the Blessed Virgin and her Assumption into heaven, for it was necessary to die before she could enter heaven. Whether we consider her death or her Assumption into heaven, the words of Christ in the gospel of this day are applicable to her: *Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.* Mary chose the best part at her death, for it was a holy, a blessed death; but she chose in a greater degree the best part after her death, for she was assumed into heaven body and soul, and exalted there above all the angels and saints. Let us consider this best part which Mary chose—

I. At her death, and
IL After her death.

Part I.

The Blessed Virgin chose the best part *at her death;* for she died—

i. *Without the pangs of death.*

(«·) Death is for all men more or less painful and terrible. How great are often the sufferings of the sick, even to their latest breath. Contemplate a dying person in the throes of death! Does not a shudder come over you when see how his limbs are

stretched out, with what difficulty he breathes; what great drops of perspiration stand out on his forehead, how his countenance is distorted, how he groans again and again, till finally he is motionless—a prey to death. Truly death is something unnatural, therefore terrible and painful. It is unnatural, because God did not will it; we have incurred it as a consequence of sin; it is something terrible, because it is the separation of the soul from the body. Moreover, death often causes great fear and anguish, as we read even of the saints. When King Ezechias, who had led a very pious, holy life, was informed by the Prophet Isaias that he must die, he turned his face to the wall and "wept with much weeping."—*IV. Kings* 20: 2, 3. St. Hilarion, St. Ephrem and St. Jerome expressed great fear before dying. The reason why even saints trembled at the thought of death was because they had sinned more or less during their life, and knew not whether they had really obtained the remission of their sins, or whether they would overcome all temptations on their death-bed and persevere to the end in a state of grace. Not as with other men, or even as with the saints, was the death of the Blessed Virgin, for she was free from every sin, from original as well as from every actual sin. In the hour of her departure from the world she was as pure and immaculate as on the day of her birth. She died without any bodily pain, without the least sickness, her death was in reality nothing more than a sweet slumber. She was also free from every fear. Her conscience told her that she had devoted all the days of her life to God, and that she had not committed the least fault; she was undoubtedly assured by divine revelation that she would persevere in grace to the end and die a happy death. She awaited death therefore with the greatest peace and tranquillity, indeed, with the greatest desire, longing for nothing more ardently than to be dissolved and to be with Jesus, her son

(Æ.) Such an enviable lot is not granted to us. As we are sinners from our mother's womb, and have in many ways offended God from our childhood, we must bear the consequences of sin which brings upon us a more or less painful death. Such a death, however, is no evil, but is of great advantage to us, because it is a means of atoning for the temporal punishment due for our sins, and of obtaining merits for heaven. Only one thing renders death evil, and that is sin, for "the death of the wicked is very evil."—*Ps.* 33: 22. The more you detest and shun sin, and the more zealously you serve God, the more quiet and peaceful will one day be your death

2. *In consequence of yearning, ardent love.*

(a.) Not sickness or old age, but love, ardent love, was the cause of Mary's death. Between the death of the Blessed Virgin and that of the saints there is again a great difference. The saints died *in the love of God·,* they loved him above all things and therefore desired most ardently to be perfectly and for ever united with him. But Mary died *because of her great love of God.* Love burned in her heart so vehemently that it gradually consumed her life and caused death. St. Francis of Sales says: "According to a legend, the phoenix, when grown old gathers a quantity of aromatic wood upon the summit of a mountain, and lies down on it as on a bed of honor to die. When the sun has reached the hour of noon and sheds his burning rays upon the earth, this peculiar bird, in order to co-operate with the heat of the sun, continues to flap his wings on the funeral pile till it takes fire, whereupon, burning with it, he dies in these aromatic flames." "In like manner," continues this Doctor of the Church, "the Virgin Mother, by virtue of a most lively and continual re membranee, recalled to her mind all the mysteries of the life and death of her Son, and besides received the most holy inspirations which this divine Son, the Sun of Justice, sends down to mortals from the height of his eternal noon-day; and since she on her part moved the wings of her soul by constant meditation, this divine love finally consumed her as a burnt-offering of the sweetest odor. Therefore, she died enraptured, and hastened to the embraces of her loving Son; thus, even at her death, she chose the best part."

(£.) Let us be solicitous to die *in the love of God,* if not *because of our love of God;* for, if we depart this life in such a manner, our death will be a happy one, no matter how it may otherwise be. We shall die in the love of God if we depart this life reconciled to God in a state of grace. Let us, therefore, shun sin, but if we should have the misfortune to lose the grace of God, let us at once make an act of contrition and a good confession as soon as possible, to recover the grace we have forfeited. Let us all enter into judgment with ourselves and after having set our conscience in order, let us walk in the fear and love of God that we may one day die a holy and a happy death.

Part II.

Mary chose the best part *after her death.*

i. *Because after her death she was assumed body and soul into heaven.*

(a.) It is not an article of the faith, but only a traditional pious belief that the body of the Blessed Virgin Mary was assumed into heaven after her death. It is an opinion perfectly conformable to the sentiments of piety and respect which we owe to the Mother of Gba. This preservation from corruption and speedy assumption into heaven was a privilege justly due to that sacred body, which was never defiled by any sin, but preserved from the common curse of mankind—to that body from which the eternal Word received his own adorable flesh. The Church favors this opinion so much that she includes an account of it in the breviary from the works of St. John Damascene, as conducing to edify and excite the devotion of her children. This saint says: "It is an ancient tradition that at the time of the glorious death of the Blessed Virgin all the Apostles, who for the salvation of nations journeyed through the world, were suddenly transported bodily to Jerusalem. Being there they were favored with an angelic apparition, and heard a psalmody of the heavenly choirs; thus Mary surrendered her soul with heavenly glory into the hands of God. Her body, which had conceived the Son of God in an ineffable manner, was deposited in a coffin during the singing of hymns by the angels and Apostles, and was interred by them in Gethsemane, in which place the chant of the angels continued for three days. But, after it had ceased the Apostles opened the grave, because Thomas, who alone had been absent, arrived only on the third day, and wished to show his reverence to the body which had conceived the Lord. But nowhere in the grave could they find her body; they saw only the linen in which it had been wrapped, and perceived an indescribably sweet odor issuing from the tomb. They closed the grave again. Amazed at this mysterious, wonderful event, they could only infer that he who had assumed flesh of Mary the Virgin, who became man and was born of her, and who in his Nativity preserved her virginity unsullied, wished also to preserve her immaculate body after her death from corruption, and honor her before the general resurrection of the dead by translating her into heaven." Now, since the Church has admitted this account of St. John Damascene into the breviary, she manifestly favors the traditionary belief that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. Many Fathers of the Church also favor this opinion. Thus St. Epiphanius compares the Assumption of Mary to the miraculous manner in which Enoch and Elias were taken up into heaven. St. Augustine says: "Who could be so presumptuous as to assert that the most holy body, in which Jesus Christ assumed human flesh, had been delivered to worms as food?" St. Gregory of Tours refers to a tradition, according to which he says that Mary, with body and **soul, entered into heaven. St. Ildefonsus of Toledo, St. Peter**

Damian, Hugo of St. Victor, St. Thomas erf Aquin, St. Bonaventure, St Bernard, and many other fathers and divines say the same.

(b.) Our bodies die, and after death return to dust and ashes, but on the last day God will raise them to life again. What will then be our portion? Jesus Christ tells us this in these words: "They that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."—*John* 5: 29. He who abuses his body, its senses and members, by sin, can rest assured that with body and soul he will be cast into hell-fire. A short pleasure—a long pain. But he w'ho yields his body, its senses and members to the service of God, and to the practice of good works, can hope with confidence that with the body and soul he will be admitted into heaven. A short pain—an everlasting happiness. Therefore, if you truly love your body, and wish it to fare well in eternity, do not defile and desecrate it by excesses and vices, especially by the vice of impurity, but employ it in doing good, and make a sacrifice of it to God, according to the admonition of the Apostle: " I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service."—*Rom.* 12 : 1.

2. *Because she was raised above all the other saints and heavenly spirits,*

(a.) On account of her dignity, Mary is the Mother of God; for she conceived and brought forth the Son of God. What dignity can be compared w'ith it! In view thereof the Holy Fathers place her far above all the angels and saints, and designate her their queen. St. Chrysostom says: " Mary is the mother of him who was begotten of the Father from all eternity, whom angels and men recognize as the Lord of the universe. Do you wish to know how much higher this Holy Virgin stands than all the heavenly powers? Behold ! they stand before the throne of God with fear and trembling, covering their faces with their wings, but she freely approaches the throne of God and intercedes for the human race with him whom as mother she brought forth." St. Thomas of Aquin says: "By becoming a Mother, Mary has obtained a dignity almost infinitely great on account of her intimate union with the highest good. Mary received from her Son a crown of immortal glory, and a throne above all the other saints and heavenly spirits. They are the servants of God; *she is his mother."*

(b.) On account of her merits. Faith teaches us that the glory of the elect in heaven is in proportion to their virtues and merits

on earth. "He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; and he who soweth in blessings, shall also reap blessings."—*II. Cor.* 9: 6. Mary sowed in blessings; no gift of nature or of grace remained inoperative in her. Her intellect was continually occupied in learning to know God and his perfections better and better; her heart beat only for God, and from it aspirations of love continually ascended. Each interior illumination, each impulse to good, she carefully made use of in order to practice virtue, and to increase in the love of God. Theologians say that Mary never, as was the case with the greatest saints, received an unfruitful grace, that is, a grace with which she did not immediately co-operate with the greatest fervor. Thus it happened, that she increased sanctifying grace in her soul in an incomprehensible manner. Since Mary by far surpasses all the saints in virtue and merit, it necessary follows that she also surpasses them in glory, happiness and triumph as their queen. Therefore, St. Bonaventura says: "As the Blessed Virgin surpasses all the saints in the grace of a virtuous life and in merits, so she also stands higher than the elect in the grace of glory and reward." Long before him St. Basil said: "As the splendor of the sun surpasses the splendor of all the stars, so the glory of the divine mother surpasses the glory of all the other saints."

PERORATION.

Mary thus chose the best part *both at her death and after her death.* At her death, because she died without pain, in the most perfect tranquillity, and only as an effect of her ardent love; after her death, because she was assumed into heaven body and soul, and exalted there above all the saints and heavenly spirits. You must also choose the best part; learn a lesson from Mary, this mirror of justice, and regulate your life according to her example. Shun every sin, for it is sin alone that can bring upon us an unhappy death and a miserable eternity hereafter. Serve God with persevering fervor, and practice the Christian virtues, especially those which in your state of life you should practice. Thus with Mary you will choose the best part, and may hope to die a good, peaceful death, and be admitted into the mansions of bliss. Amen

The Assumption.

THIRD SKETCH.

HOW MARY RENDERED DEATH EASY, AND HOW WE MAKE IT DIFFICULT.

Mary hath chosen the best part.—Luke 10: 42.

Mary hath chosen the best part. She was so prudent that she never lost sight of that which every one must expect, viz., the dying hour. We call her "Virgin most prudent" in the Litany of Loretto because, among other reasons, during her whole life she did everything possible to render death easy for herself. That she really succeeded, the festival of to-day teaches us, for it refers to that happy hour in which the holy Virgin surrendered her beautiful soul into the hands of her Creator, and celebrated her glorious entry into the heavenly Jerusalem. Truly the death of Mary was an easy death, a death without fear, without anguish, without pain. Perfectly conscious she lay on her bed in the most sublime ecstasy, ardently desiring the vision of the Most Holy Trinity, and filled with joy because in a few moments she was to see her dearly-beloved Son face to face, never again to be separated from him for all eternity. There is certainly not one among us, who would not wish to die such an easy death. Why, then, are we so foolish as to do everything possible to render death difficult? Instead of imitating Mary and of choosing what she has chosen, we knowingly continue in our perverseness, which manifestly can result only in a miserable end. That we do not act prudently, as Mary did, but foolishly, like the children of the world, I shall prove to you to-day, by showing you—

How Mary rendered death easy, and how we make it difficult.

Part I.

1. The Blessed Virgin made death easy for herself *because she zealously employed all her time for the salvation of her soul.* She made use of every moment in a manner pleasing to God; at one time engaged in work, at another, in prayer, although she also prayed at work if not with the mouth at least with the heart. She considered every new day as a new gift of grace from her bountiful Creator, and was solicitous to spend it for his greater honor and glory. There is not a moment in the life of Mary in which she did not perform good works, practice virtues and gain merit for eternity. What wonder then that death was easy for her after having employed all her time so profitably!

2. But what do we do? How we waste our time! how seldom we employ it in doing good according to the will of God! We waste it by pure idleness, by idle convers. tion, by indulging in excessive sleep, by various amusements and pleasures, and often by worse things. We waste it especially by indulging in worldly sentiments and by forgetfulness of God, because we seldom think of his presence. Every moment that is not dedicated to God, that is lived without him, is lost for eternity. We live, act and labor as if we were masters of our own time and could dispose of it as we pleased. And we do this knowing at the same time that St. Paul exhorts us: "See, therefore, brethren, now you walk circumspectly: not as unwise, but as wise: redeeming the time, because the days are evil."—*Ephes.* 5: 15, 16. We should undoubtedly value time more if we had to purchase it at the cost of much money, for we value whatever costs money; but because God bestows upon us this precious gift gratuitously we frequently consider it a worthless thing and leave many moments unemployed. At the same time we forget the terrible truth that before the judgment-seat of God we shall have to give an account of every moment of our life. This improper use of time is one of the chief reasons why it will be so difficult for us one day to die.

Part II.

1. Mary by her good works acquired *a rich store of merits for heaven.* She not only did what God willed, the least things as well as the greatest, the easiest as well as the most difficult, but she also did all in the very manner in which God willed, just when and where God willed, everything without the least repugnance, cheerfully and with the greatest readiness; finally, she did everything solely because God willed it. Her heart was always with God; it beat for him alone, longed only for him; for herself she had no wish, desired nothing. What she had once said to the Angel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word" *{Luke* 1:38), she repeated every time she recognized anything to be the will of God. Her love for her neighbor was almost as intense as her love for God. She manifested this virtue on all occasions whenever an opportunity presented itself. She was friendly, gentle, affable and merciful towards every one, ever ready to render assistance and consolation to the afflicted. (The marriage feast at Cana.) Now when Mary in the hour of death remembered the countless merits which she had acquired by her fervent love for God and for her neighbor, how could dying be otherwise than easy for her?

2. But what do we do? Alas! we acquire little or no merits at all for eternity. Many live entirely without God; they care no

more for him than for a stranger, do not pray to him, and never visit him in his churches; their only solicitude is to make money, to accumulate worldly possessions, and enjoy the pleasures and amusements of the world; they conduct themselves as if there were no God, no eternity, no heaven, no hell. How terrible will be the death of such people! The majority of us are not of the number of these God-forsaken worldlings; nevertheless, we are far too destitute of merits before God. We labor indefatigably and have no merit; we pray daily, go to church, assist at mass and hear the word of God, and have no merit; we abstain from flesh-meat on Fridays, and give alms to the poor, and have no merit; we carry our crosses and afflictions, and have no merit. Why? Because the good we accomplish is done in a state of sin; all that is not done in a state of grace has no value for eternal life, no matter how good it may be otherwise. Others have no merit because in performing their good works they fail to have a good intention, and do not unite their actions and sufferings with the actions and sufferings of Christ. Sometimes we begin to store up for ourselves a few treasures in heaven. Having purified our conscience by a good confession and recovered the grace of God we are zealous in doing good, and conscientiously fulfil the duties of religion and of our state of life. But it generally happens that after a little while we throw away these acquired treasures, these merits, because we do not constantly walk in the path of virtue, but return to sin. Now, he who commits a mortal sin loses all the merits he had previously acquired; hence it follows that if a man appears before God empty-handed, he surely will not die happily, but very unhappily because he has only to expect the fate of the unprofitable servant mentioned in the gospel.

i. Mary, although innocence itself, *led a life ofperfetual -penance.* She was so little in her own eyes that she deemed herself unworthy of the least honor or respect. She cried out unceasingly from the bottom of her heart for grace and mercy for herself and the whole human race. She was not content to devote every free moment during the day to exercises of devotion and prayer, but deprived herself of sleep during the night in order to pray. In her fervor she not only observed the prescribed fast-days, but also many others not of precept; she also undertook the fatigue of an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem, although she was not obliged to do so. As her life was to be an exemplary one she always walked on the way of the cross; like her Son, she was never without sorrow and sufferings. How much she must have suffered from the hardships of poverty, the perse**cution of** Herod, the banishment into Egypt, and from living,

even after her return, in a kind of exile for fear of Archelaus. Under these, and many similar circumstances we may easily imagine what continual crosses she had to bear together with her divine Infant. What must have been her feelings to see him in want, suffering cold, and every other inconvenience; when she lost him in the Temple and saw him exposed to hardships and ill-treatment on other occasions, persecuted and reviled by the Pharisees and others, his meekness despised, and his holy doctrine contradicted! It was a continual affliction to her tender heart, ever zealous for the honor of God, and full of charity for men, to know of the countless sins, and blasphemies against God, such scandals, abuses, and ruin of souls! But what was her grief to see her Son in his sacred passion, bound, crowned with thorns and dying on a cross! How sharp a sword of grief must have pierced the soul of this Mother of Sorrows! And after the Ascension of her divine Son how earnest were her sighs to be united with him in glory. The weight and duration of her crosses, and the great virtues which she practiced under them, were the means of making death easy for her and of attaining the happiness which she now enjoys.

2. But death is hard for ourselves *owing to our impenitence.* We have sinned much and grievously during our life, and have done little or no penance in atonement for our sins. Great sinners before, great penitents now, it should be, but such is not the case with us. Having confessed our sins we think we have done all that is requisite; we seldom reflect upon our past sinful life and our obligation to make satisfaction to divine justice. That is a consoling repentance which consists in being sorry for our sins every day, and asking God's grace and pardon. All zealous penitents have done this. Thus the great penitent David says of himself: "I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me." —*Ps.* 50: 5. And again: "I have labored in my groanings, every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears." —*Ps.* 6: 7. We should, from time to time at least, impose a voluntary penitential work upon ourselves, *e. g.,* a visit to the church, which has not been commanded, a somewhat longer prayer, a deprivation in eating, drinking and sleeping, or other lawful things. Of such things, however, most of us will not hear; and the worst of it is we will not even accept in the proper spirit the penances which God in his love and mercy imposes upon us. How do we behave when he sends us an affliction, a cross? We begin at once to murmur and complain, and try to rid ourselves of it, as if we had never committed a sin, never deserved a punishment, had no need of penance, in fact, as if God treated us harshly and cruelly. If our Lord says: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and

follow me" *{Luke* 9: 23), what will be our portion one day if we act in such a stubborn manner towards God and will not deny and mortify ourselves? Do we not do everything possible to make death difficult?

Part IV.

i. *Finally, Mary, feared sin all her life.* She feared sin, although she had not within herself, as we have, the evil concupiscence, the propensity to sin, and notwithstanding that she was always fortified with a fulness of heavenly graces. The world, however, prepared temptations for her, for it was then, as to-day, steeped in wickedness, and everywhere laid snares for man by its false maxims, seductive allurements and bad examples. Mary was well aware of the dangers of the world and feared lest she might fall. She, therefore, kept a strict watch over her senses, her eyes, ears and tongue; she avoided the society and conversation of light, frivolous persons and all occasions of sin and lived a life as retired as that of the most zealous religious. But we shall not err in believing that she was not free from the temptations of Satan even in her solitude. As he tempted her Son to pride, so he certainly also tempted her, suggesting to her the beauty of her incomparable virtue, of her truly angelic piety, of her virginal purity, in order to flatter female vanity, that she might indulge in feelings of self-complacence. In every temptation of this kind Mary feared to offend God, therefore she had recourse to prayer each time without delay, and full of humility and confidence implored God's help and protection. In such a way she confounded Satan with all his wiles, and preserved her heart free from every sin; hence her peaceful death.

i

2. We make death hard, *because wefear everything in lhe world more than sin.* How few there are who say with earnestness and from the heart the petition in the Lord's Prayer: "Lead us not into temptation." How few who in temptation itself invoke the assistance of God with persevering fervor! How few, when they have unfortunately consented to the temptation and sinned, make an act of contrition and earnestly resolve to do penance! Alas! how many there are who by degrees go so far as to add sin upon sin without any remorse of conscience. Some continue their sinful habits until old age, others change only the species of the sin. They perhaps no longer commit the sin of impurity as in youth, but are guilty of envy, detraction, slander and calumny; they no longer, as in youth, get drunk, but are guilty of hatred and enmity; they are no longer, as in youth, extravagantin dress or anxious to make a show, but they are guilty of avarice and

various injustices in business transactions. What will be the end of such a sinful and impenitent life but a miserable death, a death in anguish and despair!

PERORATION.

A pagan spoke these memorable words: "Man is on earth to learn to die," and he spoke truly, for like everything else we must learn how to die, if we desire a good death. You often say: "Everything depends on how you die." Very true, but dying itself depends on the preparation we make for it. As a man lives, so he dies; his works follow him, the good as well as the bad. If therefore we wish, like the Virgin Mother of God, to die an easy, happy death, let us use the same means she employed. Let us make good use of our time, acquire a rich treasure of merits by the practice of Christian virtues and good works; let us lead a penitential life, avoid sin as the greatest evil, and keep the commandments. Then we shall share her lot, and like her be taken up into heaven. Amen.

FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME OF MARY.

Gospel.—*Luke* i: 26-38. At that time: The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said to her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found grace with God: Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High: and the Lord God shall gi\, unto him the throne of David his father: and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the Angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God. And behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: Because no word shall be impossible with God. And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word.

SKETCH.

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MARY OUR LADY MOST POWERFUL AND CLEMENT.

And the Virgin's name was Mary.—Luke 1: 27.

It was already the custom of the early Christians to venerate **and** invoke the name of Mary together with the name of her **di-**

vine Son; in later times the Church celebrated a special festival in honor of Mary, the first trace of which we find in Spain, where it had been introduced in parish churches by the devotion of the faithful, and was sanctioned by the Apostolic See in the year 1513. After the glorious victory at Vienna, under the invocation of the Blessed Mother of God, over the infidel Turks, who threatened the destruction of all Christendom, Pope Innocent XL, in the year 1683, ordained that the festival of the holy name of Mary should be annually celebrated on the Sunday within the Octave of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The name *Mary* has various significations, among them that of *Lady*. Mary bears this name with justice; for as Mother of God and Queen of angels and men she can justly claim the highest nobility, the first place among all creatures. On her feast-day we shall consider her—

I. As our Lady most powerful;
IL As our Lady most clement.

Part I.

Mary is most powerful—

I. *In regard to herself* because she **gained the tf ost complete** victory over Satan.

(λ.) Eve, our first mother, was conquered by the devil and brought under his dominion, but against Mary, our second mother, he could not prevail; he laid in wait for her heel, but she crushed his head.—*Gen.* 3: 15. God, by a special grace, preserved her from the stain of original sin, and thereby secured her against the power of the devil in the first moment of her existence. Hence, Origen says: "Mary was not contaminated by the breath of the poisonous serpent," and St. John Damascene: "The serpent had no access to this paradise, *i. e.,* to Mary." We need not doubt that the devil in many ways tempted the Blessed Virgin during her earthly life, for it is peculiar to him to direct his arrows especially against those who are eminent for virtue and sanctity. Indeed, as the arch-enemy of our salvation dared to attack the Son of God and tempted him on three different occasions, how can we believe that Mary was spared his assaults? She however, always proved herself to be most powerful, and against her the fury of hell raged in vain; she victoriously withstood all the attacks of Satan and put him to flight. What weapons did she make use of in her combats against him? Those which her divine Son recommends to his disciples and to all men when he says: "Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temp-

tation."—J/a//. 26:41. Mary walked cautiously and shunned whatever appeared dangerous; at a distance even she perceived the snares laid for her by Satan, and either evaded or broke them with a strong hand; she met his attacks with courage and confidence in God, fought against him with determination and perseverance, looking always towards God and begging his assistance, and thus she always came off victorious in the contest.

(3.) As long as you live, my brethren, you will be exposed to temptations; for "the life of man upon earth is a warfare."—*Job*

1. But it is your duty to overcome temptations. Can you overcome them? Yes, with the grace of God; for "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it."—*I. Cor.* 10: 13. But what must you do in order to overcome temptation? You must take Mary for your model, and, like her, watch and pray. Be watchful over yourself; for the devil oftentimes makes use of the inclinations of your heart and your senses to tempt and entice you to sin. As soon as you notice an inordinate inclination within you, fight against and subdue it that it may not gain the mastery over the will and induce it to consent to evil. Be prudent, cautious and circumspect in your conversation, and as much as possible avoid places, pleasures, persons, and meetings which are likely to be the occasion of temptation to you. Pray with great fervor and in every temptation cry out with David: "O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me."—*Ps.* 69: 2. If you do this, you will, like the Blessed Virgin, be strong against all the assaults of the enemies of your souls and overcome them.

2. *In regard to us.*

(a.) If we have recourse to Mary, she will extend to us her most powerful protection in our struggle against hell and will not suffer any harm to befall us. It was revealed to St. Bridget that God has given Mary such great power over all the evil spirits, that, as often as they attack any of her clients who invoke her assistance, the least sign made by her suffices to put them to flight; for they will rather suffer double pain than endure the ignominy of being subdued by the power of Mary. Therefore St. John Damascene, full of consolation and joy, exclaims: "O holy Mother of God, I hope for certain to be saved, because an invincible hope in thee is my weapon. Yes, I shall courageously pursue my enemies, when I have thy assistance and thy help as a shield in my hands." There lived at Reisburg a Canon Regular, called Ajrnauld, who was extremely devout to the Blessed

Virgin. When at the point of death he devoutly received the last sacraments, and having caused his Religious brethren to be assembled he begged them not to abandon him in his last moments. Scarcely had he made this request, than it seemed he had some presentiment of what was to happen, for he began to tremble frightfully. A cold sweat, and convulsive throbs, sufficiently indicated what passed within him; but it was more manifest, when in a faltering voice he said to those present: "Do you not see those who surround and wish to carry me into hell? Brothers, invoke Alary for me, I have great confidence in her." The Religious instantly began the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, but when they came to the words: Holy Mary, pray for him, the dying man interrupted them by saying: ‹fRepeat the name of Mary, for I am already before the judgment-seat of God." Then after a short pause, he said, as if replying to his accusers, "Yes, I did that certainly, but I performed penance for it." Afterwards addressing the Blessed Virgin, he said: *"O* Mary! I shall vanquish my enemies, if you come to my aid." The night passed in these terrible assaults, during which he ceased not to make use of the crucifix and to invoke the holy name of Mary; but at break of day peace was restored, and Arnauld, with a serene countenance, manifested his transports, since Mary had obtained for him eternal salvation. Then turning towards the Blessed Virgin, who invited him to follow her, "I come, my Mistress," said he, and in his efforts to rise, he calmly gave up the ghost and followed Mary, as we trust, into the mansions of the Blessed.

(â.) If at any time more than another, it is in our dying hour that we need the assistance of Mary. The hour of death is the most dangerous hour, because the devil then sees that only a few moments are left to him for temptation; therefore he redoubles his attacks in order to plunge us into perdition. The hour of death is the all-decisive hour, upon it depends an entire, immeasurable eternity; on whatever side the tree shall fall there it shall lie. If we die a good death, all is gained for eternity, but if we die in the state of sin all is lost for eternity. Shall we not therefore have recourse to Mary, and ask her to obtain for us a happy death? We may expect and hope with confidence to obtain this grace from her if we daily ask it of her and endeavor to lead a penitential life. Hence St. Jerome says: "Mary assists her faithful servants not only in the hour of death, but she even goes to meet them on their way to heaven, to inspire them with courage and to accompany them before the throne of God."

Part II.

Mary is a good mother. We have proofs of this in—

1. *The gospel.* Here we find the most beautiful evidences of her goodness. The Archangel Gabriel brings her the message that she is chosen by God to become the Mother of his Son. It is left to her own free choice to give her consent or to refuse it. However great the dignity to which she is to be exalted, she has reasons to decline it, for it involves the greatest sacrifices. If she does not become the Mother of God, she may lead a quiet and contented life, but if she becomes the Mother of God great sufferings and trials are in store for her; she must, in fact, become a queen of martyrs. Who could have blamed her if in consideration of these sufferings she had refused her consent? But she gives her consent when the angel has explained to her the whole mystery and says: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy mord.—Luke* 1: 38. Thus Mary becomes the Mother of God, and willingly takes upon herself the countless trials and sufferings connected with this dignity. And why? Out of love for men, as St. Bernard says. If Mary had not given her consent we should have remained without a Saviour. For as upon the con/ent of Eve to the temptation of Satan depended the perdition of the whole human race, so on the consent of Mary, the second, better Eve, to the proposal of the angel, depended the salvation of the whole human family. Mary, therefore, consented in order that the divine plan for the redemption of man might be carried out. No matter how great the sufferings and trials I may experience, she said to herself, I will become the Mother of God that man may be redeemed. Does not Mary here show herself to be a good Mother? As such she also reveals herself at the marriage at Cana. She had no sooner noticed the distress and embarrassment of the newly-married couple when the wine began to fail, than full of compassion she turned to Jesus and interceded with him in their behalf. Whereupon Jesus heard and granted her petition and wrought his first miracle by changing water into wine.

2. *The Holy Fathers and spiritual writers.* They call her our mother and do not hesitate to say that she loves us more tenderly and is more solicitous for our welfare than our temporal mothers. "Eve," says St. Bernard, "was a cruel step-mother to us, for through her the infernal serpent contaminated the first man by his poison, but Mary is our true Mother, because she has prepared for us all an antidote. Why should frail man fear to approach Mary? There is nothing severe or repellent about her; she is full of mildness and mercy." Again he says: "Who, O Blessed

Virgin, can measure thy goodness according to its length, breadth, height and depth! I dare to measure it. The height extends from earth to heaven, where thou art solicitous for our salvation. The depth reaches from heaven to earth, nay, into the lowest abyss of hell, because thou dost arrest and check the power of hell, and dost snatch those souls from it which it already claims as its own. The length and breadth extends from one end of the globe to the other, because thou art charitable in all places of the earth." St. John Damascene particularly praises her goodness towards sinners, saying: "Mary has been appointed by God as an asylum for all who have deserved death for their crimes, and she is especially desirous to obtain forthose sinners who invoke her the grace of a perfect conversion and reconciliation with God, as numerous persons affirm, who through her intercession have been converted and led to salvation." St. Alphonsus, that devout servant of Mary, exhorts us to have great confidence in her, and to invoke her in our necessities, "for," says he, "she is as gentle as the best mother, and full of mercy and grace."

3. *Ths history ofall times.* Countless Christians, who, in their necessities obtained the help of Mary, confess that she is a good mother, who averted evil from them and conferred upon them benefits of every description. Her goodness manifests itself most wonderfully in the conversion of sinners, as the following history shows: A dying man, who was plunged in the greatest misery at the remembrance of his former excesses, obstinately refused to make a confession. St. Vincent Ferrer being informed of it hastened to visit him on his death bed. Having saluted him in a friendly manner, he said to him: "Friend, you know that Jesus Christ died for you, how can you then have so little confidence in his mercy? Ah! how deeply you wound the infinite love which he bore you!" The wretched man was not afraid to reply to this touching admonition in these really diabolical words: "I want to be damned to displease Jesus Christ." "And I," replied the saint, "will rescue you from perdition to prepare a great joy for Christ." He then turned to those around him and requested them to say the Rosary with him to obtain through the all-powerful intercession of the Mother of Mercy the conversion of this obstinate sinner. Their prayer was heard, and Mary showed on this occasion what a good Mother she is. The heart of this hardened sinner was softened and his conversion effected at the moment when he was about to die in impenitence. He confessed with great compunction of heart and died, full of confidence in the mercy of God, the death of a true penitent.

PERORATION.

Since Mary is such a good Mother, you have certainly every reason to place your entire confidence in her, and to invoke her protection and intercession in your corporal and spiritual necessities. Have recourse to her in all the sad events and tribulations of life, and if it be good and profitable for you she will certainly obtain aid for you from God. Especially pray daily to her to take an active interest in your eternal salvation and to obtain for you the grace that you may serve God with fervor all the days of of your life. The goodness of Mary should stimulate you to be charitable towards your fellow-men and to love to do them acts of kindness. Be especially charitable towards the poor, afflicted and abandoned, and help them as well as you can. Consider the words of the Apostle St. James: "Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world."—i; 27. By an active love for your neighbor and by blameless conduct you will obtain the protection of Mary and God's favor and grace in life and in death Amen.

THE SEVEN DOLORS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

(See also 17th Sunday after Pentecost.)

Gospel.—*John* 19: 25-27. At that time: There stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas and Mary Magdalen. When Jesus, therefore, had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own.

FIRST SKETCH.

MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS A MOTHER OF DOLORS.

O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.—Lament. 1: 12.

Mary was a mother of sorrows, not only on Good Friday, when her dearly-beloved Son was crucified, but during the whole of her motherhood, for more than thirty-three years. Being an affectionate mother, the persecutions and sufferings of her Son affected her most deeply, and no contumely was offered him which did not painfully afflict her. She was likewise well aware of the painful death he was one day to die. Wherever she went and whatever she did, she saw always her divine Son on the cross. The whole of her motherhood was an uninterrupted martyrdom. It is, however, true that the most sorrowful day of her life was that on which she stood on Mount Calvary beneath the cross. Then it was that she was plunged in a sea of sufferings; then it was that she felt as if heaven and earth were falling upon her and crushing her; then it was that she could break out into the lamentations of the prophet: *O all ye that pass by the way attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.* Let us then

assemble to-day at the foot of the cross and consider what the Blessed Mother of God suffered. The greatness of her sufferings will become somewhat manifest to us if we consider:

I. Whom she loses;
II. The circumstances of her loss.

Part I.

i. *Whom does Mary lose?*

(σ.) *Her only Son.* When parents have many children, their sorrow is generally not so great if they lose one by death. But it is otherwise if they have only one, and at the same time are in good circumstances. Such a child is the child of their heart, the apple of their eye, and if death takes it from them, their sorrow knows no bounds; they refuse all comfort. Mary has only one Son, and this only Son she is to lose; before long he will bow his head on the cross and die. Ah! what grief will rend her maternal heart at this loss. How truly could she exclaim: *O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.*

(3.) *Her most perfect Son.* A mother's heart is a peculiar heart. If a mother has a worthless child, a son who renders her life miserable, a daughter who brings shame and disgrace upon her, you may indeed hear her exclaim: "O that I knew nothing of this child; I should not care if I saw him or her on the bed of death'." But this is not said in earnest; if such a wayward child suffers great pain or is in the agonies of death and dies—oh! then everything is forgotten, the mother weeps bitterly, mourns and laments the death of her son or daughter, for that child is flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone, and nature cannot be denied. Witness David's mourning for his rebellious son Absalom. Now consider the grief of Mary over the loss of her Son. Such a holy Son the world has never seen, for Jesus Christ is holiness itself. But he is also the most perfect Son, who causes his mother nothing but joy; upon him her eye rests with the greatest pleasure, and the sweetest joy fills her heart as often as she thinks of him. And of this Son she is deprived! Who can describe her grief at such a loss? Can she not with justice exclaim: *O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there by any sorrow like to my sorrow."*

(ci) The Son of God. If one loses a few pence one cares little about the loss, because it is trifling. If we lose a dollar, we

feel the loss more perceptibly; but if one loses a hundred or a thousand dollars one takes the loss a great deal more to heart; in short, the greater the loss, the greater the grief. Mary does not lose a sum of money, she does not lose the whole world, or heaven—but she loses the Creator of heaven and earth; she loses her Son, who is God. How great, how immeasurable is her loss, and consequently her grief! It is certainly no exaggeration when St. Bernardine says, that the agony of Mary was so great that if it had been divided among all men they would have died immediately. Can she not then justly exclaim: *O all ye that pass by the way attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.*

2. All of us, whoever we may be, likewise have *a child, an only child, a very dear, holy child;* I am almost tempted to say, *a divine child;* and this child we can lose, and many, very many, really do lose it. What child is this? It is our immortal soul. It is—

(λ.) *Our only child.* We have but one soul. One day an ambassador visited the pious Pope Benedict XII. to ask a favor of him for his prince, which the Pope could not grant without committing a sin. He, therefore, said to the ambassador: "Tell your prince, if I had two souls I might lose one for him, and save the other for myself; but as I have only one, I cannot and will not lose it." This must be your language if the tempter approaches you and endeavors to entice you to sin. Tell him, I have only one soul, which I cannot and will not lose. If you have the misfortune to fall into mortal sin be reconciled to God without delay by true repentance and say to yourselves: I have only one soul, which I cannot and will not lose. If you find it difficult to perform a certain duty, *e. g.,* to forgive an offender, to repair an injustice, to give up a sinful familiarity, say to yourselves again, I have only one soul, which I cannot and will not lose.

(3.) *A very dear, holy child,* for it is adorned with sanctifying grace. If I except God and the angels, there is nothing in heaven and on earth that can be compared with the beauty of a soul which possesses sanctifying grace. St. Catharine of Siena was once favored with the vision of such a soul, which so enraptured her that ever afterwards all that the world considers beautiful and glorious appeared to her hideous and worthless. Now if you take care of a beautiful garment so as not soil or tear it, should you not take far more care of your precious soul that it may not suffer injury or loss? And if it grieves you to see a beautiful dress soiled, should you not be grieved over the contamination of your soul? And if, finally, you cleanse a beautiful garment when it is soiled, will you delay to purify by humble con-

fession your soul which has been soiled by sin? Do you care more for a beautiful dress than for your immortal soul?

(c.J In a certain sense a divine child. It is true, the soul is a creature of God, but if she possess sanctifying grace, she carries God's image within herself; in truth, she is entirely filled with the Godhead. Consider a piece of red-hot iron. According to its nature it is truly iron, but iron penetrated by fire, so that it seems no longer to be iron but fire. Thus it is with a soul in the state of grace. She is thoroughly penetrated by God, so that we might with truth say that she is not created and human but divine. What an invaluable jewel then is our soul! People complain and lament, if owing to some calamity they lose anything valuable, *e. g.,* their house in consequence of fire; and you are not penetrated by the most poignant grief when you fall into mortal sin and are compelled to say to yourselves, I have lost my soul! How true were the words of that saint who said, that there is no greater fool upon earth than the sinner, who does not take to heart the loss of his soul. Such a sinner resembles a madman who rejoices at the fire that burns down his dwelling. Meditate frequently on the words of our Lord: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" *{Matt.* 16: 26) and protest with the saints: "Lord, let me rather die than sin and lose my soul."

Under what circumstances does Mary lose her Son ?

1. *He was crucified and suffered the greatest ignominy and pain.*

(at) Jesus hangs on the cross. What ignominy! Crucifixion among the Romans was the most ignominious punishment that could be inflicted. No Roman citizen, only slaves, could be crucified. Our Saviour therefore was treated like a wretched slave and at the same time as a great malefactor; for he died between two robbers and murderers who were crucified with him. What ignominy for Jesus, the adorable Son of God. And how intense are his pains! There is not a limb in his body which does not endure the most violent pains. How great are the sufferings of his thorn-crowned head! Of his body, lacerated and covered with wounds! How intense the sufferings of his hands and feet, pierced with nails and fastened to the cross! Every moment he suffers the agony of death, so that it has been said that during the three hours he hung on the cross he suffered death every moment. What must have been the sufferings of Mary, his loving

mother, on beholding such a sight! Truly all the ignominy, all the sorrows, all the pains of her Son were hers, too; "for," says St. Jerome, "as many wounds as were on the body of Jesus, so many wounds were in the heart of Mary." And St. Chrysostom says: "He who would at that time have been upon Mount Calvary would have seen two altars, one in the body of Jesus, and the other in the heart of Mary." No human tongue can express what Mary endured at the foot of the cross of her Son; her sorrows were immeasurable because the sorrows of Jesus were immeasurable. Such is the manner in which Mary loses her Son.

(3.) What awaits him who loses his soul? Hell. What is hell? A *fire* and a *worm,* as Christ tells us: "If thy eye, scandalize thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee with one eye to enter into the kingdom of God, than, having two eyes, to be cast into the hell of fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished."—*Mark* 9: 46, 47. Hell is a *fire.* If permission were granted you to do what you please, to cheat, to steal, to commit impurity, on condition that after the wicked deed you would have to put your hand into the fire and have it burned, would you sin? Certainly not. And yet you sin for years and do not fear the fire of hell? Hell is a *worm.* What kind of a worm? Continual torture of conscience, terror and consternation, fury and despair returning every moment; that is the worm which gnaws at the heart of the damned. This pain surely is more terrible than that of fire. Oh, how senseless and infatuated are the children of the world who for such fleeting, wretched, earthly goods and joys, purchase for themselves such terrible and eternal pains! Will you too be so foolish?

2. *He was abandoned.*

(a.) Jesus is abandoned by man. With the exception of a few souls no one mourns for him, no one consoles him in his unspeakable pains. Those who crucify him sit beneath the cross in sight of the suffering Jesus and like gamblers divide his garments among them. The Scribes and the Pharisees mock him *(Matt. 27:* 39, etc.), and even one of those who were crucified with him derides and blasphemes him. Ah, what must the Sacred Heart of Jesus have felt at such abandonment! Jesus is abandoned too by his heavenly Father. Even on the cross he is the beloved Son, in whom God the Father is well pleased, but he withdraws from the humanity of his Son all consolation, in order to enable him to drink the bitter cup to the very dregs. This abandonment by God was the source of unspeakable torment to our crucified Sa-•"iour, therefore he cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou

forsaken me?—*Matt.* 27: 46. Consider now what Ma<y must have suffered during this abandonment of her Son. What must she, the most loving mother, have felt, since she loved her Son so affectionately, and was unable to procure for him the least help or consolation in his abandonment? Such is the manner in which Mary loses her Son.

(£.) Sinner, how will you fare in eternity if you lose your soul? You will be abandoned by the whole world. The goods, joys and pleasures of this world will forsake you, your friends and relatives will abandon you and think no more of you; your mother, the Church, will forsake and forget you; for you she will have no prayers, no sacrifice, no sacraments, no indulgence, no grace; you will be her child no longer, because you are delivered up to damnation. Finally, God himself will forsake you, and you will lose him for all eternity; you will be godless in the true sense of the word. Sinner, will you not take this terrible loss to heart?

2. *Finally, she was unable to help him.*

(».) A loving mother finds consolation in contorting and nursing her afflicted, suffering child. Not so Mary, the Mother of God. She stands beneath the cross—that is the only way in which she can manifest her love for Jesus. Her eye only, not her arm, reaches him; she can do nothing, absolutely nothing, towards mitigating his great sorrow. She cannot support his wearied head, nor bathe his bleeding wounds, nor alleviate the intolerable pains of the wounds caused by the nails. She cannot even hand him a drop of water in his great thirst. She can give him no assistance; her hands are bound. Thus helpless she must leave him. Such is the manner in which Mary loses her Son.

(3.) Behold here a figure of the helpless condition of the sinner who loses his soul. As soon as the sentence of damnation is pronounced upon him it is irrevocable for all eternity. For him the fountain of grace is dried up for ever; he can pray no longer. Since in life he would not implore God's mercy his punishment hereafter will be that he can never again say an Our Father. He can no longer receive a sacrament in order to reconcile himself to God; the time of grace is passed for him; he lived fifty, sixty, seventy years or more upon earth and every day, every hour, offered him graces for the salvation of his soul, but he suffered the time to pass without profit to himself; therefore his punishment in eternity is that he cannot have even a moment for obtaining salvation. He burns in the abyss of hell and is consumed with the desire to escape from his torments but cannot Two words

continually resound in his ears: *for ever, never.* If in the abundance of his torments he asks how long they will last he receives the answer: *For ever.* If tormented by fearful pains, he asks when the day of deliverance will come for him, he is told: *Never.* This *for ever* and *never* enrages him and causes him to despair, and this fury and despair continue for ever and ever, for all eternity. What a miserable state is that of the damned.

PERORATION.

O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorron like to my sorrow. Mourn with Mary, the sorrowful Mother, and never forget that for love of us and for our sake she became a Dolorous Mother. Because she loved us, and wished nothing more ardently than our redemption, she took upon herself the burden of divine maternity, thus rendering our redemption possible. Be grateful to her as long as you live. Have also compassion upon your soul, and take care that you do not lose it. If the soul be lost, all is lost. Employ the present Easter-time for the worthy reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, and henceforth serve God with fidelity all the days of your life. O Mary, Dolorous Mother, remember the sorrows which thou didst suffer at the foot of the cross of thy Son, and have mercy on us sinners. Assist us in life, and take us under thy protection in the hour of death, that we may persevere in the grace of God and be saved. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

WHAT MARY SUFFERED AS MOTHER OF CHRIST.

O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.—Lament, i: 12.

There is scarcely a place in which so much sorrow, need and misery prevailed as in Jerusalem after the destruction of this renowned, populous and prosperous city by her enemies, the Babylonians. To describe the great calamity that had come upon Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremias represents the city exclaiming: *O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like tc my sorrow.* With justice indeed does the Church on this day apply these words to the Virgin Mother of God; for if we consider what Mary suffered from the time of her becoming thu

Mother of God to the death of her Son it will become manifest to us that among the children of men there are no sufferings that can be compared to hers. Let us then to-day direct our eyes to Mary, the Mother of Dolors, and meditate on her sorrows, which were—

I Great before and after the birth of Christ;
II. Greater still during the life of Christ, but
III. The greatest at his passion and dealh.

Part I.

Great were the sorrows of Mary—

1. *Before the birth of Christ.*

(a.) As the gospel records, the Roman Emperor Augustus issued a decree that all the Jews should be enrolled and the value of their property estimated. To comply with this, every one had to repair to his native place to be enrolled. Since Mary and Joseph were descendants of the royal house of David, they had to journey to Bethlehem, because this city was the birth-place of king David,—*Luke* 2:1, *et seq.* Consider with what difficulties for Mary this journey was attended. Nazareth, where she lived, was about a three days' journey from Bethlehem; the way thither was mountainous and difficult to travel; the inclement, cold season of winter with its short days was at hand; the time when Mary should bring forth her Son was drawing near, and she feared that her delivery might be attended by fatal consequences should it take place on the journey, or in a strange place where she would be destitute of all succor. Thus you can easily imagine that Mary made the journey to Bethlehem with the greatest anxiety and sorrow.

(5.) Under the special protection of God Mary arrived safely with Joseph at Bethlehem after many difficulties, which without doubt she was obliged to endure on her long journey. As Mary and Joseph were natives of Bethlehem they no doubt had friends and acquaintances there. To them they hastened after their arrival; from them they sought a friendly reception and hospitality. But how they were deceived! They treated them coldly and gave them to understand that they had no room for them. How painful to Mary must have been this uncharitable rejection! Joseph sought a lodging with other people, he wandered through the streets of Bethlehem, knocking at this door and at that, humbly requesting a night's lodging for himself and his spouse; but in vaio, the same heartless answer everywhere: We have no

room for you. Who can describe the sorrow and sadness of Mary? Night approaches, and in all the city of Bethlehem they can find no home. She may go her way, she may sleep under the canopy of heaven on that cold December night; of what concern is it to the inhabitants of Bethlehem? Mary was forced to say to herself what afterwards St. John said in the beginning of his gospel: "The Son of God, who rests under my heart, is in the world, and the world does not know him, he is come to his own, and his own do not receive him." Truly, Mary was a Mother of Dolors even before the birth of Christ.

2. *After his birth.*

(λ.) Saddened and sorrowful, Mary and Joseph leave Bethlehem and go out in order to find a place of rest for the night. Outside the city they find a dilapidated stable which they enter, and there they spend the night. "And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that the should be delivered. And she brought forth her first born son and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger." —*Luke* 2: 6, 7. My God, thus Mary found a stable just in time, otherwise she would have been delivered in the open field! Where is there a mother who is in such abandonment at her delivery as Mary was? An old, dilapidated stable is the palace where the Mother of God brings forth the Son of God; a miserable crib is the golden cradle in which she places him, a little hay and straw supply the place of abed, an ox and ass that happened to be tied there serve to keep off the chill from the royal Babe. Ah, what sorrow for the divine Mother to see her beloved Child so abandoned at his entrance into the world, and to be unable to procure for him what is not denied to the child of the poorest beggar!

(£.) Forty days after the birth of her Son, Mary brought him to Jerusalem to present him in the temple to the Lord. There it was that the holy aged Simeon took the Saviour into his arms and inspired by the Holy Ghost, said: "Behold, this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce."—*Luke 2*\ 35. In these words Simeon foretells the divine Mother that her Son will meet with a great deal of contradiction among men, and will be persecuted, and that on his account she will have to endure sufferings as intense as if her heart were pierced by a sword. Ah, how much this prophecy of the aged Simeon must have wounded her heart! From the moment it was uttered there was never an hour in her whole life in which bitter sorrow did not fill her soul, as she herself is said to have

revealed to St. Bridget. "As often," she said, "as I wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, as often as I looked at his hands and feet, my heart was torn with grief, for I thought of his crucifixion."

Now if Mary even at the birth of her Child was a Mother of Sorrows, can married people be astonished if crosses and tribulations come upon them? He who seeks a paradise in matrimony is greatly mistaken. Not in vain does St. Paul write: "Such *(i. e.,* married people) shall have tribulations of the flesh."—*I. Cor.* 7 ; 28. Let young people reflect well on this and not enter the married state thoughtlessly. Many married people would give their right hand, if they could return again to single blessedness; if there were a novitiate for the married state ninety out of a hundred would leave it before the year was out. Married people, however, must patiently bear the difficulties of their state of life. If they have spent a bad life, as, alas, is too often the case, the cross which they must bear in the married state is a well-deserved punishment, and they should fervently pray with St. Augustine "Lord, here burn, here cut, but spare me for eternity." If, however, they have lived piously and virtuously whilst single, they may be consoled if they have to bear a heavy cross in their married state, for God sends them, as he did to the Blessed Mother of his Son, crosses and afflictions, in order to furnish them with the opportunity of increasing their merits for heaven and of receiving hereafter a more glorious crown.

Part II.

Still greater were the sorrows of Mary during the life of Christ. Let us consider only a few of the events recorded in the gospel.

1. No sooner had Herod heard that Jesus, the new king of the Jews, had been born than he sought his life. In order to withdraw the divine Child from his wicked designs, an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: "Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him."—*Matt.* 2: 13. What terror and consternation for Mary when she hears that the life of her divine Child is in danger! And now, all at once, without a moment's delay, she is to set out on a long and dangerous journey without any preparation for it; she is to go into a foreign country—into Egypt, where abominable idolatry prevailed, and dwell among a people, who were anything but friendly to the Jews, and from whom she could not expect an affectionate reception or assistance owing to her poverty and abandonment. I leave it to you to judge how painful

this flight into Egypt must have been to the Divine Mother. And what must she not have suffered in this flight with Joseph and the divine Child? Will there ever be a mother upon whom so much sorrow comes during her whole life, as Mary experienced in the first days of her maternity? And what anguish of spirit she must have experienced during her long sojourn in Egypt!

2. Another sorrow, greater still, awaited Mary when Jesus had attained his twelfth year. As the Evangelist Luke (2: 42-49) relates, Mary and Joseph went every year to Jerusalem for the solemn day of the Pasch, and when Jesus was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem according to custom and took him with them. And after they had fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and his parents knew it not. What consternation to them when they noticed their loss. They returned to Jerusalem after having already made a day's journey, to seek the lost Child. To fully realize how great Mary's sorrow was at the loss of Jesus, we should have experienced the joy she found in him, and know how much she loved him. Several Fathers of the Church and spiritual writers say that this was the most bitter sorrow of her -whole life, for in all her other griefs she at least had Jesus with her, but now she was separated from him and knew not where he was. Her sorrow was the greater, because she feared that she was no longer worthy of the society of her Son, that she had committed a fault on account of which Jesus had withdrawn his presence from her. She expresses her unspeakable maternal sorrow in these words: "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold, thy fathei and I have sought thee sorrowing."—*Lzike* 2 : 48.

3. A new season of sorrow commenced for Mary when Jesus entered upon his public life. As soon as he began to manifest himself by preaching his gospel the fulfilment of the prophecy of Simeon commenced; henceforth Mary saw and heard again and again that Jesus was the object of persecution, "set as a sign that shall be contradicted."—*Luke* 2: 34. Wherever he preached, in Galilee or Judea, in Capharnaum or in Jerusalem, the Scribes and Pharisees never desisted from intrigue and vituperation; whatever he said or did was censured and condemned; hatred and calumny attended him in all his actions. Even at Nazareth, where he had lived up to his thirtieth year, so great was the hatred of the people that they -wished to kill him. When he preached the gospel to the inhabitants of Nazareth in the synagogue and upbraided them for their unbelief, they became so incensed against him that they ejected him from the city and brought him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. "But he, passing through the midst of

them, went his way."—Zw^ 4: 20, *ei seq.* How great must have been the sufferings of the Blessed Mother of God, since in all probability she was a witness of this attack upon the life of her Son! And what sorrow and grief must have pierced her maternal heart when she saw and heard that Jesus was most shockingly blasphemed and vilified, as a man in compact with the devil, when they took up stones to cast at him, when the leaders of the Jews threatened every one adhering to him with expulsion from the synagogue and even decreed to allow Jesus to live no longer, but to slay him as soon they could take him. Thus it is true that Mary's sorrow continually increased and was greater during the life of her Son than at his birth. There is an adage which says: "Little children, little crosses; big children, big crosses." Only too many parents experience the truth of this saying. Little children cause their parents a good deal of anxiety during all the long years of their childhood till they are grown up and can earn their own livelihood. But when they are grown up, the cares, anxieties and troubles of parents really begin. I shall mention only one instance which frequently occurs. A son, or a daughter marries; the newly wedded pair take a business, run into debt, and every now and then come to their parents seeking assistance; but the parents are unable to give them any, although they may wish to do so; again, the son or the daughter lives unhappily with his or her partner and complains so often and so bitterly as almost to break their parents' hearts. Is it not, therefore, true: Big children, big crosses? Now, dear parents, if your grown children, otherwise good and well-behaved, cause you such sorrows, think of Mary, whose cross was far greater than yours, and like her resign yourselves to the will of God. A still greater affliction for Christian parents are wayward children—sons and daughters, who will not hear of obedience, who lead a dissipated, immoral life, and give reason to fear that they will one day lose their souls. To parents who have such children I shall make two observations: If you are the cause of the degeneracy of your children by having neglected your duty, humble yourselves before God, striking your breast and saying: "Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault." Repent of your sin and at least do now what is possible in order to induce your children to lead better lives, that God may be a gracious judge to you hereafter. But if you have fulfilled your parental duties towards your children, if they have become wayward through no fault of yours, you can at least console yourselves with the thought that you are not responsible before God, but that on the contrary you will be rewarded hereafter for the pains you have bestowed upon their education. Do not, however, neglect as long as you live to employ every means in your power to rescue your wayward children from perdition.

Part HI.

The sorrows of Mary were greatest at the passion and death of Christ.

1. *At the passion of Christ.* If we vividly represent to ourselves the passion of Jesus from the garden of Olives to Mount Calvary and consider what he endured before Annas and Caiphas, Herod and Pilate, and then especially call to mind how on Mount Olivet he sweat blood in his unspeakable agony, how inhumanly he was scourged, crowned with thorns, mocked, insulted, maltreated, and how after being condemned to death by an unjust sentence he took the heavy cross upon his shoulders and carried it to Calvary, even our cold hearts must be penetrated with profound sorrow and emotion. Now you may well believe that what Mary did not see with her own eyes, she heard from the Apostles and other sympathizing friends, and although on his way of suffering she could not always accompany her Son, her heart was with him every moment and experienced the same painful feeling as if she had seen all his sufferings with her own eyes. If the women of Jerusalem sympathized with Jesus on his painful journey to Calvary, and wept, what a nameless woe must have filled Mary's heart when she saw her Son, whom she ineffably loved, and for whom, if possible, she would have sacrificed her life a thousand times, subjected to such cruel tortures! When Margaret, daughter of the Lord Chancellor, Blessed Thomas More, met her father, who had been condemned to death on account of his fidelity to the faith, and saw how he was led to the place of execution like a criminal worthy of death, she could only twice pronounce these words: My father! and fainted away. Ah, what tongue can express Mary's anguish when she met her most beloved Son with the heavy load of the cross upon his shoulders on his way to the place of execution! If God had not miraculously supported her she would not only have fainted, but would have fallen dead to the ground.

2. *At the death of Christ.* Mary was an eye-witness of all the tortures inflicted upon her Son on Mount Calvary, for, as St. John remarks, she stood by his cross.—19: 25. Mary, therefore, sees how he is stripped of his clothes and ordered to stretch himself on the cross which is lying on the ground; she sees the executioners take the nails, and hears every stroke of the hammer with which they drive them into his hands and feet and fasten him to the cross; she sees how the cross is lifted up, and how he hangs naked with a crown of thorns on his head, causing inexpressible pain; she sees how a dense darkness covers the earth, and the

sun withholds his light, in order not to be compelled to witness the tragedy enacted on Calvary's mount; she hears the seven words which Jesus at intervals speaks on the cross, especially when he says to her: "Woman, behold thy son!" and to John: "Behold thy mother" *(John* 19: 26, 27), and how in his utter abandonment he exclaims: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."—*Matt. 2J:* 46. She hears the scoffs and blasphemies of his enemies, who deride him to the last moment; she sees, finally, how Christ, after three hours of infinite agony, bows his head and gives up the ghost, and at last she sees how a soldier with a lance opens his heart, out of which immediately flows blood and water. Mary sees and hears all these things on Calvary. Ah, who can imagine the sorrow that pierced her soul? What are all the maternal sorrows that have ever existed and shall exist in ages to come compared to the sorrow of Mary? A drop of dew compared to the ocean.

Is there one who would not weep,
Whelm'd in miseries so deep
Christ's dear Mother to behold?

Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that Mother's pain untold?

Christian parents, you have often to suffer great sorrow when a child is snatched from you by death, especially if it was a favourite child, or an only child. Console yourselves with the thought of Mary the sorrowful Mother, who lost her only, most tenderly loved Son by the death of the cross. Call to mind the words of the Holy Ghost: "He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul... Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time. For his soul pleased God: therefore, he hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities."—*Wisd.* 4: 11-14. Do not indulge in grief, remember that you are Christians, let not your grief be violent and noisy, but moderate, and mingle resignation with your sorrow, saying with Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord."—*Job* 1:21.

PERORATION.

Let us all make the resolution to accept patiently from the hand of the Lord the sufferings and tribulations which come upon us in this valley of tears, and to bear them, if not with joy, at least with resignation as long as it shall please him to afflict us. If Mary, the Mother of God, the Queen of angels and saints, was

obliged to traverse the sorrowful way of the cross, why should we refuse to imitate her, since we have often and grievously offended God by our sins? Let us not forget that the way of the cross is the only way to heaven. "In your patience (in suffering) you shall possess your soul." Let us, therefore, walk in the footsteps of the sorrowful Mother of God, and, as St. Peter says, let us not think strange the burning heat which is to try us, as if some new thing happened to us, but being partakers of the sufferings of Christ, let us rejoice, that when his glory shall be revealed we may also be glad with exceeding joy.—*I. Pet.* 4: 12, 13. Amen.

FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF MARY.

FIRST SKETCH.

THE HEART OF MARY A PLACE OF REFUGE FOR THE AFFLICTED.

Let my heart bejoined to you.—I. Paralip. 12: 17.

We read in the first book of Paralipomenon, or Chronicles, that many princes and leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel, with more than a hundred thousand brave warriors came to David, in order to join him and to acknowledge him as their king. David received them in a friendly manner, assuring them that his heart would be joined to them, that is, that he would impart to them his pleasure and protection. What the great king David did, Mary does in a *far* higher degree; she turns to us with motherly affection and invites us in all our necessities and affairs to have recourse to her protection, in the words of her divine Son: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—*Matt.* 11:28. Let us then, to-day, on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary, make a pious meditation on the Heart of Mary as an asylum—

I. For those corporally afflicted;
II. For those spiritually afflicted.

Part I.

The Heart of Mary is an asylum for the corporally afflicted. Countless are the afflictions under which the children of Eve sigh and groan in this valley of tears. Some suffer the greatest poverty and need; others have an unhealthy constitution, or suffer the most excruciating torments on a bed of sickness; some have to work hard the whole year round; others again have some secret misfortune. Thus the words of the wise Sirach are continually true: Great labor is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is on

the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb, until the day of their burial into the mother of all."—*Fcclus.* 40: 1, 2. Now, to whom shall we have recourse in these afflictions of life? After God, to Mary, the holy Mother of God, for in her heart we always find consolation and help. Proofs:

i. *The gospel.* St. John tells us of a wedding at Cana in Galilee to which Jesus, Mary and the Apostles were invited. At the wedding the wine began to fail. The poor bridal couple became greatly distressed and knew not from whom to seek counsel or assistance. What does Mary do? Does she perhaps think: This is no concern of mine. I cannot help it. No; she no sooner notices the need and embarrassment of the bridal pair than she has compassion on them; quietly turning to Jesus she informs him of the distress of the newly married couple, saying with maternal confidence: "They have no wine."—*John* 2: 3. Her divine Son approves and sanctions her petition, for he works his first miracle, changing water into wine. Oh, what a sympathetic, merciful heart does Mary, this charitable Mother, manifest! Who can doubt her goodness! Let us not think that Mary loves us less now that she is reigning in heaven. No, for love is stronger than death and many waters cannot quench it. Mary's heart breathes love for us even in heaven, and indeed a great deal more than formerly when she walked upon earth. "Great," says St. Bonaventure "was the mercy of Mary towards the unfortunate when she lived in exile upon earth, but it is far greater since she reigns in heaven;" "for now," as St. Alphonsus adds, "she more clearly understands our misery, and therefore has more compassion for us."

2. *The Holy Fathers and spiritual writers,* who find in the Sacred Heart of Mary a sure asylum for all who are afflicted. St. Anthony applies to Mary the words of the Sacred Scripture: "As a fair olive-tree in the plains was I exalted" *(Ecclus.* 24: 19), and says: "Every one can approach an olive-tree which stands in the open field and pluck its fruits. In like manner all men can approach the Blessed Virgin to obtain mercy from her." St. John Damascene says: "The Blessed Virgin is sweet repose to all who labor and are burdened; she is a consolation to the afflicted, wholesome medicine to the sick, a safe port to the shipwrecked, and a speedy help to all who need her assistance." That is saying a good deal, but St Bernard goes still further when he writes: "Mary has become all to all, she opens her bosom of mercy to all, that each one may receive of its plenitude, the captive, redemption; the sick, health; the afflicted, consolation; the sinner, pardon; the just, grace. Mary allows all to come to her for relief, she shows mercy to all; with graces of every description she

comes to the assistance of every one in his need." Therefore St. Thomas of Villanova admonishes all who are afflicted to take courage and to have recourse to Mary with confidence. He says: "O ye of little faith, draw breath, have courage, ye poor sinners, for this great virgin is the Mother of your God and of your judge, she is the intercessor of the human race, who can obtain of God whatever she asks of him, who endeavors by her wisdom to pacify him in every possible way, who receives all and does not refuse to defend any one, no matter who he may be."

3. *History.* Numerous Christians of all periods unanimously and gratefully confess that in their difficulties they have had recourse to Mary and found help. Example. In the month of November, 1838, the crew of a vessel which had just arrived at Paimpol, in France, forty-eight in number, fulfilled a vow they had made on a most perilous voyage from Newfoundland. A terrific tempest had arisen, their sails were rent asunder, and for three days they were in continual danger of being consigned to a watery grave. The ship at length began to fill with water, and all hope of safety seemed lost, when the crew, by common consent, turned their eyes to the *Star of the sea,* and invoked Mary. They promised that if she saved them, they would devoutly visit the church in Paimpol where there is an image of our Lady much venerated by the people. They had scarcely concluded their prayer when the weather became more calm, and the waves began to subside. Profiting by this providential change they repaired their sails, and were favored with a favorable wind till they reached the coast of Brittany. They landed in safety at Knod towards the decline of the day, and their first act was to prostrate themselves on the ground and give thanks to God for their return. Then they intoned the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and advanced bare-footed and bare-headed along the banks and through the streets of Paimpol to the church of the "Bonne Nouvelle." The people attracted in crowds by the novelty of the sight, followed them, among them being some who were actuated by a stronger and better feeling than mere curiosity. There were parents who went to give thanks for the return of their children, and wives to thank Mary for having restored their husbands to them. Tears streamed from every eye, and this immense multitude knelt before the altar of the powerful Virgin who has received from her Son the power to command the winds and the waves. The torches shed a dim light on the recess of the sanctuary where stood the image of the Blessed Virgin, whose inclined head and extended arms seemed to say: "Come to me, I am your mother." The pious mariners with the most touching expressions of sentiment, chanted the hymn: *Ave, maris stella* "Hail, star of the sea," in which they were joined by the people:

"Bright Mother of our Maker, hail!
Thou virgin ever blest,
The ocean's star, by which we sail,
And gain the port of rest."

4. *Finally, a great many holy shrines of the Blessed Virgin.* When we visit the places where a miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin is venerated, we read on the votive tablets how by the intercession of Mary one was delivered from this calamity, another from sickness, danger, etc., how by the powerful help of the divine Mother many in imminent danger of death find deliverance, the blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, and the lame walk. Therefore have confidence in Mary and in all your necessities have recourse to her maternal Heart; she will always receive you graciously and grant your requests, if they be otherwise good and pleasing to God.

PART II.

The Heart of Mary is an asylum for those spiritually afflicted. People are spiritually afflicted—

1. *When they are tempted.* So long as we live we are surrounded by powerful enemies who desire nothing less than our eternal ruin. These enemies are: *The devil.* "Be sober, and watch, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour."—*I. Pet. 5:* 8. *Theflesh. 'TLvvrf* man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured."—*fames* 1: 14. *And the world.* "All that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the concupiscence thereof."—Z. *John 2:* 16, 17. For protection against these enemies of our salvation we should have recourse to Mary, the Blessed Mother of God; for she is the powerful woman who has crushed the serpent's head, and the wonderful ark before which all the powers of darkness take to flight. Hence Innocent II. says; "As the life of man upon earth is a continual warfare, let every one who is assailed by his enemies, the world, the flesh, or the devil, direct his attention to her who appears as an army in battle array; let him call on Mary, that through the grace of her Son she may obtain for us help from the holy place, and from the heavenly Sion impart to us the effects of her protection." St. Francis of Sales happily experienced what it is to have great confidence in Mary. When seventeen years old he was in Paris,

where he studied and lived so piously that inflamed with the love of God he even then seemed to taste the joys of heaven. A very severe trial assailed him then; the devil suggested to him the terrible thought that God had decreed from all eternity to condemn him to hell, and that no matter what he might do his ruin was inevitable. At length it pleased God to send him help through Mary, to whom from his youth he had a particularly tender devotion. One day he entered a church, knelt down before her altar and prayed fervently: "O my Queen, be my intercessor with thy Son, whom I dare not address. O my Mother, if I, unhappy man, cannot love my Saviour in the next world, knowing how amiable he is, at least obtain for me the grace of loving him in this world as much as I can." That very moment he felt relieved as if a heavy weight were taken from his heart; his former peace and tranquillity were restored and never again left him. His devotion to Mary increased so much that he never wearied during his whole life of proclaiming her love and mercy. Do not lose courage when various trials and temptations assail you; appeal to the Sacred Heart of Mary with confidence; there you will find protection against all the enemies of your soul, and grace to be victorious over them

2. *When they have the misfortune to fall into grievous sins.* **He** who commits a mortal sin is in the greatest danger of losing his soul, for he may die any moment; and if he dies in a state of sin, he will be lost for ever. Now since Mary wishes nothing more ardently than that all men be saved, it is evident that she does all she can to rescue sinners from perdition. We read in the Old Testament *{II. Kings* 14: 6) of a woman of Thecua, who one day came to David, prostrated herself before him and disclosed to him that her two sons had quarreled with each other in the field, and that one had struck tne other and killed him. According to the law of retaliation the kindred desired to slay the murderer; therefore she asked the king for grace for him, that she might not be deprived of both sons. The king granted her petition. It appears to me that Mary acts as did this woman. She seems to say to God, when his justice is about to arm itself for the punishment of the sinner: "My Lord and my God, I had two Sons, Jesus, thy Son and mine, and man. Man by his sins has slain my Son Jesus on the cross; now thy justice will slay the murderer, my second son. Ah! act not thus towards me, leave me not childless, but spare the sinner!" What think you? Will the heavenly Father turn a deaf ear to this prayer? No, certainly not, for if, as the Bible in many places tells us, the prayer of **a** just man avails much, and the prayer of saints disarms the anger of God and moves his heart to mercy towards the sinner, **what** will not the intercession of Mary avail? The angels and saints **are**

but servants of God, whereas Mary is the Mother of God. Will she not therefore avail more than the servants of God? "Mary," says St. Bernard, "is the Mother of the King of heaven, therefore she cannot remain unheard." Hence, if a sinner had fallen so low that neither an angel nor a saint could obtain of God the grace of pardon for him, he should not despair of his salvation—there is one who can yet save him—the Blessed Mother of God. A Theophilus, a Mary of Egypt, both great sinners, experienced what a powerful and amiable Mother we have in Mary, for through her they were rescued from perdition. Therefore Bernard says: "O my Queen, thou despisest no sinner, who has recourse to thee, no matter how much he may be stained by sin. or how detestable he may appear. If he asks thy help, thou dost not refuse to extend to him thy succoring hand and to rescue him from the abyss of despair. Let us thank and praise God, O amiable Virgin Mary, for having made thee so mild and gentle even towards the most abandoned sinners. Wretched is he who does not love thee, and who has no confidence in thee when he has recourse to thee. He will be lost who does not call upon Mary for help, and who was ever lost who sought her assistance ?"

3. *When on their death-bed.* When we are about to die, hell will employ every means to plunge our soul into perdition. Then are applicable the words of Holy Scripture: "The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time."—*Apoc.* 12: 12. Then it is that Mary takes her children and devout servants under her protection, defending them against the assaults of the evil spirit and obtaining for them a happy death. St. Bernard says: "This exalted Queen of heaven takes the souls of her faithful servants under her protecting mantle, accompanies them before the judgment seat of her Son, and there intercedes for them." A spiritual writer relates that a great servant of Mary said to him when dying: "O father, how glad I am now that I served the Mother of God so faithfully in life. Death has nothing bitter for me. I do not fear it, because the Queen of heaven is my advocate."

PERORATION.

The Heart of Mary, then, is in truth an asylum for the corporally and spiritually afflicted; for she procures consolation and help for the needy, courage and strength for the sorely tempted, pardon for sinners, and protection for the dying. Therefore, have great confidence in Mary, the Blessed Virgin and Mother of God; present to her all your anxieties and all the secrets of

your heart, recommend yourselves daily to her protection; endeavor to be *Ood children of Mary, and take her for your model in all your actions. Preserve a pure heart; diligently practice the Christian virtues, especially the virtues of humility and chastity, and serve God all the days of your life. If you do this, Mary will be a good mother to you and obtain for you from God all that is good and salutary, especially the greatest and most de· sirable of all graces, the grace *of a* happy death. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

SIGNIFICATION OF THE PICTURE OF THE HEART OF MART.

And thy own soul a sword shallpierce.—Luke **2:35.**

We have several pictorial representations of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is frequently represented as a *Virgin* with a lily in her hand, because the lily is an emblem of virginal purity; very often she is represented as the *Mother of God;* as such she always has the divine Child with her and usually carries in her hand a sceptre, the sign of her royal dignity; for as Mother of God she is above all the angels and saints—she is their Queen She is also represented as the *Mother of Sorrows.* In this picture she has one or seven swords in her heart. The representation with one sword refers to the prophecy of Simeon : *And thy own soul a sword shallfierce ;* that with seven swords has reference to the seven events in the life, passion and death of Christ, which were especially painful to the Blessed Virgin. Of the Immaculate Heart of Mary we also have an appropriate picture. It is generally represented encircled with a wreath ot flowers, pierced by a sword and surmounted by bright flames radiating from it. Let us to-day consider the symbolic signification of the picture of the Sacred Heart of Mary, and ask ourselves the three following questions. What is the signification of—

I. *The wreath offlowers which surrounds the Heart of Mary,*
IL *The sword by which this Heart is pierced, and*
III. *The flames which radiate therefrom ?*

Part I.

The Heart of Mary encircled with a wreath offlowers.

1. Wreaths of flowers were at all times considered an emblem of innocence and purity of morals. Even among· the pagans it was customary for virgins to adorn themselves with flowers; and the images and pictures of the goddesses are represented with flowers in their hair to indicate that they were free from every stain. In like manner it is customary among us for maidens to wear wreaths of flowers at the procession on Corpus Christi and on other occasions, as at their first Communion. The pictorial representation of the Heart of Mary surrounded by a wreath of flowers symbolizes her immaculate purity. She is indeed more pure and holy than any other saint, and surpasses even the Cherubim and Seraphim in the splendor of her sanctity. She was not only born without original sin, but it is certain that she never in her life committed the least fault, nay, more than this, not even an inordinate inclination arose in her angelically pure heart. "When there is a question of sin," writes St. Augustine, 'T except the holy Virgin. On account of the honor due to our Lord I do not wish her to be mentioned at all, for she was more abundantly fortified with graces than she needed in order to completely overcome sin." And St. Ambrose says of her exterior conduct: "In her eyes there was nothing bold, in her words nothing frivolous and in her actions nothing extravagant; in her gestures and manners there was nothing sentimental, in her gait nothing inconsiderate, in her voice nothing petulant, so that even her exterior conduct was a picture of her soul—a picture of the most spotless innocence." Therefore, the Church calls her the lily among thorns, the mirror of justice, Virgin most pure and most chaste.

2. Let Mary be your model, and guard against every sin. It would be the height of self-delusion were you do think that sanctity consists in a few pious practices, without endeavoring to avoid and to flee from all that is sinful. You may pray, associate yourself with numerous confraternities and societies, make pilgrimages to holy shrines, wear the scapular and medals, go to confession and communion twice or three times a week—these and a thousand things more you may do, but all will be of no avail, of no benefit to you, unless you cleanse your heart from all evil inclinations and avoid at least every mortal sin. The Scribes and Pharisees did a great deal of good and so conducted themselves externally that they were looked upon as models of sanctity, yet Christ rejected their justice and pronounced woe upon them because they were corrupt at heart and in secret were ad

dieted to various vices and sins. Exercises of religion and good works are in themselves pleasing to God and necessary for salvation; yet they are not holiness itself, but only means by which we arrive at a state of holiness; and only those Christians may hope to obtain heaven, who scrupulously observe the commandments of God and lead a moral life.

Part II.

The Heart of Mary pierced by a sword.

1. You know the meaning of this sword from the above quoted prophecy of the aged Simeon: *Thy own soul a sword shall pierce.* This sword pierced her heart when, immediately after the birth of Christ, Herod sought his life and compelled her to fly into Egypt; this sword pierced her heart when she lost her Child at the age of twelve years in Jerusalem and only after three days found him again; this sword pierced her heart in the countless persecutions and sufferings which Jesus had to endure, especially during the last three years of his earthly life, for her maternal heart experienced all that her Son suffered. Finally, this sword pierced her heart on Mount Calvary when she stood under the cross, and in the most profound ignominy and inexpressible sufferings saw him bow his head and die. Thus the heart of the Mother of God was pierced by a sword as long as she lived; her whole life as a Mother was an uninterrupted martyrdom; therefore she is with justice called the Queen of Martyrs. But why did she endure this long and painful martyrdom? Out of love for us. She knew that according to the decree of God mankind could not otherwise be redeemed than by the bitter sufferings and death of Jesus Christ; therefore she voluntarily submitted herself to all the sufferings connected with her divine Maternity in order to mediate the grace of redemption for mankind, whom she most ardently loved.

2. The sword by which Mary's heart was pierced teaches us that we must pierce our heart by the sword of penance. We have all sinned, and have reason with the publican to strike our breast and exclaim: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner."—*Luke* 18: 13. Therefore, we must do penance, if we desire to be saved, for Christ says: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish."—*Luke* 13 : 3. But what is it to do penance? It is to be grieved and to repent bitterly for having offended God, it is to hate and to detest sin above all things, and therefore to disengage ourselves from everything that leads to it, however dear it may be to us; finally, it is to afflict ourselves, to mortify our-

selves interiorly and exteriorly, in order to make some satisfaction to God for our sins, as welt as to preserve ourselves from a relapse and to enable us to walk constantly in the path of virtue. Only by thus doing penance shall we save our soul. But how few perform such penance? Most persons confess without changing the perverse disposition of their heart; they confess but have not the will to give up their sinful familiarity with persons of the opposite sex, to relinquish their bad habit of cursing and swearing, of indulging in obscene discourses and filthy jests, of drinking and gambling, and of keeping unreasonable hours; they have not the will to restore unjust goods, to be reconciled with their enemies, in short, to be truly converted and repair the injury and injustice done as far as it is in their power to do so. AVhat kind of penance is that? Alas! a penance that leads not to salvation but to damnation. The heart of such penitents is not pierced by a sword, they have no true contrition for their sins, they do not hate and detest them above all things, they are not earnestly resolved to amend their lives; and for this reason they are after confession as much in a state of sin as before and expose their salvation to the greatest danger. The same may be said of those who again draw the sword out of their heart, that is, return to their former worldly and sinful life. The last state of things is worse than the first, by the relapse they are blinded more and more, and finally go so far as to refuse to hear of penance and conversion. Consider this, and see to it that at your confessions you make an act of true and supernatural contrition for your sins, and that you are firmly resolved to shun every sin, as also the proximate occasions thereof. This is **what you are** taught by the sword which pierces Mary's heart.

Part III.

Theflames which radiatefrom the Heart of Mary.

i. These flames symbolize the love of God with which the Sacred Heart of Mary was filled. "God is love," says St. Alphonsus, "he came upon earth to kindle the fire of his holy love in the hearts of all men, but he inflamed no heart so completely as the heart of his Mother Mary, for as she lived entirely free from every attachment to earthly things, she was most susceptible to the inspirations of this holy love." Mary alone perfectly fulfilled the command: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart;" in her heart there was not a spark of an inordinate worldly love or self-love; she loved God above all and in all; all her words and actions originated from the **love** of **God,** and all her virtues were fruits of this love.

2. Herein also we must take Mary for our model. To love» God is the first and greatest commandment, without the observance of which, according to the Apostle, all knowledge, the gift of working miracles, giving all our substance to the poor and even martyrdom, would profit us nothing.—Z *Cor.* 13: 1-3. In love consists our whole perfection, for charity is the bond of perfection *{Col.* 3: 14); moreover, it is charity which renders our exercises of virtue and good works meritorious in the sight of God.

3. That this love may be genuine it must be like flames. Flames *always ascend,* no matter how we hold the light. Thus the Christian whose heart is inflamed with the love of God always aspires to those things which are eternal; he labors, it is true, for temporal things, as the duties of his state of life require, and he sometimes enjoys a lawful pleasure, but he always has God before his eyes; his holy will is everything to him, and he seeks in all things to please him. Flames *consume* all things and purify metals, such as gold silver, and iron, from their dross. The love of God in the heart of the Christian produces the same effect. It destroys everything that is impure in the eyes of God; little by little removes all imperfections which still cling to us, and causes us to guard against every sin with the greatest solicitude. Flames *banish darkness* and illuminate everything in their vicinity. Love does the same. It urges us by the exercises of Christian virtues and works of mercy and charity to le our light shine before men according to the admonition of Christ: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."—*Matt.* 5: 16·

zpConsidertherefore whether your love for God resembles flames. Are your thoughts and actions directed to God? Is it your greatest solicitude in all things to do the will of God? Do you consider sin the greatest evil, and would you be ready to die rather than offend God? Happy are you, if you can answer these questions affirmatively; you are a faithful Christian and walk on the road that leads to heaven. But unhappy are you indeed if you are forced to answer them negatively, for the love of God does not burn in your heart, without which you cannot be saved.

PERORATION.

In conclusion I exhort you to look at the Sacred and Immaculate Heart of Mary and to resolve to conform your heart to

hers. May the wreath of flowers which encircles her heart admonish you carefully to avoid every sin, especially everything contrary to chastity according to your state of life. May the sword that pierces her heart urge you to do penance for your sins and to mortify yourselves interiorly and exteriorly, in order to enable you to walk constantly in the path of virtue. May the flames of love which radiate from her heart inspire you to love God above all things, and always to seek the things that are above. If in such a way you conform yourselves to the Blessed Mother of God, she will be a good mother to you in life and in death, and will obtain for you of her Son Jesus the grace to finish your course successfully and to enter into the eternal rest of heaven. Amen.

FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY.

(See also 18th Sunday after Pentecost.)

Gospel.—*Luke* 11 : 27-28. At that time: As Jesus was speaking to the multitudes, a certain woman from the crowd lifting up her voice said to him; Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breasts that gave thee suck. But he said: Yea, rather blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it.

'This was the gospelprevious to Aug., 1888, when a Proper Office and Mass were assigned to this Feast.)

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FIRST SKETCH

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THE ROSARY: IT IS GOOD TO HAVE A ROSARY; STILL BETTER TO SAY THE ROSARY.

Blessed is the womb that bore thee.—Luke **11: 27.**

As this gospel tells us, a certain woman from the crowd of people that were gathered around Jesus lifting up her voice cried out to him with enthusiasm: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee.* What this woman did, who called the mother of so great a Son blessed, we Catholics do also. We venerate Mary and call her blessed because God elevated her to so high a dignity and chose her to become the Mother of his only-begotten Son. We do this in all devotions in honor of the Blessed Virgin, but especially in the Rosary, the festival of which we solemnize to-day. To the Rosary may be applied, in a certain sense, what the Apostle says of the cross of Christ, that it is a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, but to those who believe in it a power of God in order to save them. To infidels and heretics, and even to some Catholics who think themselves very superior, the Rosary is foolishness, but good, practical Catholics who are imbued with the spirit of religion value the Rosary, carry it about

with them and constantly say it. I will therefore explain to you to-day two truths:

I. It is good to have a Rosary;
II. It is still better to say the Rosary.

Part I.

It is good to have a Rosary, for—

1. *The Rosary is a sign of our Catholic faith.* We find the Rosary only with Catholics. Therefore, a person who has a Rosary, carries it with him and takes it to church, shows thereby that he is and wishes to be a Catholic. If we see a man who is a perfect stranger to us lying dead by the roadside, we may not know to what Church he belongs, but if we find a Rosary with him, we say at once that he was a Catholic, he had a Rosary with him. The Rosary, therefore, is a sign of the Catholic faith, consequently it is good to have a Rosary, for this proves that one values and loves the holy Catholic faith. On the contrary, he who does not take his Rosary with him to Church does not, at least, give one to understand that he is a good, faithful Catholic, for the simple reason that he does not show a special sign of the Catholic faith, something which according to Catholic principles is very venerable. I do not mean to say that such a one does wrong or sins, but I do say that he does not act rightly. If he despises the Rosary and thinks that it is only fit for ignorant people and old women, but not for people of education, he would without doubt be guilty of a sin before God.

2. *The Rosary is, if worn Publicly, not only a sign, but also a profession of the Catholic faith.* As neither Jews nor pagans, neither infidels or heretics, but only Catholics have the Rosary, we may take it for granted that a person who has a Rosary and makes use of it at prayer is a Catholic, and such a one consequently makes an open profession of faith. To profess our faith is something good and pleasing to God. Christ emphatically tells us: "Everyone therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven."—*Matt.* 10: 32. And St. Paul writes: "With the heart we believe unto justice, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." —*Rom.* 10: 10. Good example in this case is of special importance. If Catholics, especially those who move in the higher classes of society, or otherwise have authority, use a Rosary at public devotions, it makes a very good and wholesome impression upon the faithful; and if heretofore they have valued and loved the

Rosary, they now value and love it the more and recite it with greater pleasure and devotion, since they see it in the hands of learned and respected men. Is not this good example, whereby one edifies one's fellow-Catholics, praiseworthy and meritorious? But what shall I say of Catholics who think themselves too learned, too grand, to carry a Rosary with them, who consider it beneath their dignity to let a Rosary be seen in their hands? To use a mild expression, they are afraid to acknowledge their faith; in fact, it oftens happens that they give scandal, for it is to be feared that others think the Rosary is not a very important devotion, since it is never seen in the hands of those who pass for learned and educated persons. But to give scandal is certainly very wrong. Catholics who are ashamed of the Rosary and for this reason never use one at their devotions, should beware lest the words of Christ should prove applicable to them: "He that shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him the Son of Man shall be ashamed when he shall come in his majesty."—*Luke* 9: 26.

3. *The Rosary conveys to us various salutary lessons and truths.*

(a.) The cross. This reminds us of our redemption and of everything connected with it and seems to say to us: You, O man, have sinned and incurred eternal damnation; by sin you have been reduced to so miserable a state that without the help of God you would be irretrievably lost. But God has had mercy on you, and sent his only-begotten Son into the world to redeem you. See what Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, has done and suffered in order to redeem and save you! The cross shows what an immense evil sin is, as according to the decree of God it could not otherwise be blotted out than through the death of Christ on the cross. Again, the cross shows us the infinite love of God in giving his only-begotten Son to redeem us. The cross is also a school of virtues, which you are to practice according to the example of your crucified Redeemer, for it brings before your eyes his profound annihilation and humility, his invincible meekness and patience, his love, which did not exclude even his murderers, his obedience to the most painful and ignominious death. How much, then, can we learn when we contemplate attentively the cross attached to the Rosary, and how much we are urged by this contemplation to give thanks to our divine Saviour for our redemption, to repent of our sins and to resolve to follow him.

(3.) *The beads.* The larger ones remind us of the *Our Father,* which we say at the contemplation of each mystery. How many salutary and instructive truths are brought to our recollection when we only cursorily contemplate the *Our Lather,* indicated

by the larger beads! What grace and what honor for us that we dare call God, the Lord of heaven and earth, the infinite Good, our Father! What consolation, what happiness for us to be called, and to be in reality, children of God! As the first three petitions in the *Our Father* refer to God, we are taught that to glorify God is our first and highest duty, and that in all our actions we must seek the glory of God. Furthermore, as the *Our Father* contains only one petition which refers to earthly goods, it is an invitation for us to seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, after which all things necessary for the temporal life shall be added unto us. The smaller beads, which represent the *Hail Mary,* remind us of the glorious salutation which Gabriel and Elizabeth made to the Blessed Virgin, and of the short prayer which the Catholic Church has added to this salutation. How beautiful, how consoling and how encouraging to virtue is the *Hail Mary!* How wonderfully favored does the Blessed Virgin appear to us, before whom we behold one of the highest heavenly spirits, an Archangel, sent by God to address her as full of grace, and to make known to her that she is to become the Mother of his Son! How clearly do we recognize what inestimable goods, what great treasures are the virtues of purity and humility, since, according to St. Bernard, it was precisely these virtues which rendered Mary so acceptable to God as to exalt her to the eminent dignity of Mother of God! Is not this an encouragement for us to practice these virtues according to our station in life? And what confidence may we not place in Mary, since as Mother of God she possesses the highest dignity among all creatures! She will come to our assistance in life and in death if we confidently invoke her protection and intercession. It must therefore be evident to you that it is good to have a Rosary, but far better to recite it.

Part II.

That it is *more profitable to say the Rosary* than merely to have the beads must be evident to us when we consider the manifold advantages of this devotion.

i. The success of the Rosary at its institution proved that it was pleasing to God. In the thirteenth century there was propagated in France one of the most impious sects known in history, the sect of the Albigenses. These bitter enemies of the Church laid waste the country before them with fire and sword, demolished altars and churches, murdered the clergy, and left nothing but ruin and devastation in their footsteeps. But God, who ever lovingly watches over his Church, raised up an apostolic man, St. Dominic, the founder of the Order of Preachers. Under in-

credible difficulties he wandered through the provinces infected with the heresy, and everywhere zealously preached the word of God, his efforts being aided by the sanctity of his life and by some wonderful miracles. But notwithstanding all his endeavours to convert the heretics, he met with no success. When he humbly complained to God, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him and commanded him to preach the devotion of the holy Rosary, promising him that he would thereby obtain the happiest results. The saint obeyed; he taught the people how to recite the Rosary, explained its mysteries, and through this prayer gained more souls to God than by any other means. Many thousands of heretics and an incredible number of sinners were converted, and afterwards led an edifying life. So much good did the devotion of the Rosary effect directly it was introduced.

2. Through the devotion of the Rosary *the Christians obtained a glorious victory in the year 1571 over the infidel Turks,* who, while threatening destruction to all Christendom, were completely defeated in the battle of Lepanto. As this wonderful victory was gained on the 1st of October, at the time when the members of Rosary, the festival of to-day was established and afterwards extended throughout the Catholic world.

has proved to be one of the most effectual means for the conversion of sinners. I will here give you two examples. A man condemned to death refused to make his confession. A priest did all he could to convert him; he besought him, wept over him, even cast himself at his feet. When he saw that all his exertions were of no avail, he said to him, " Let us say only one *Hail Mary* on the Rosary." The sinner did so, and suddenly became quite another man; he confessed with great compunction of heart and died penitently. According to St. Alphonsus, a great sinner named Helena once entered a church just at the time when a sermon was being preached on the devotion of the Rosary. Moved by what the preacher said on the excellence and wonderful effects of this devotion, she procured a Rosary and began to recite it. A great change at once took place in this sinner. She conceived a great detestation of her sinful life, and was so tormented by remorse of conscience that she had neither rest nor peace until she had unburdened her soul to a priest; she made a general confession with many tears and with great sorrow and com-

punction of heart. The result was that she was converted and led a penitential life to the end of her days.

4. The devotion of the Rosary *is also an excellent means for obtaining temporal benefits.* The plague raged in Bologna in the year 1630. In a short time it made great havoc not only in the city but also throughout the neighboring country, so that more than a third of the inhabitants were snatched away; business was entirely suspended, the shops were closed and whole families left. The once flourishing city resembled a charnel house; the gardens and meadows were scorched with the heat of the sun, the trees were leafless, the air was pregnant with the odor of corpses, for the number of dead was so great that all could not be interred. At last the survivors had recourse to the Rosary, and they had no sooner recited it in common than hope seemed to be awakened, the plague abated and prosperity returned.

5. Finally, the devotion of the Rosary *is an excellent means for the preservation of piety in families.* Why was religion formerly in a more flourishing condition here than now-a-days? Because the men did not frequent the saloons in the evening, to drink, gamble, quarrel and discuss politics, or to pass the time in obscene discourses; they remained at home and recited the Rosary with their families. Truly, where the members of a family say the Rosary together in the evening many sins are avoided and much good is done. In such a family there is not an incessant hankering after pleasure but every one is frugal and contented. This spirit of piety prevails; all is peaceful and the members of the family are patient and indulgent as regards the failings of others. In such a family the virtuous example of parents will facilitate the proper education of their children and the establishment of their temporal and eternal welfare. The whole art of education consists in implanting in children a love of work and a love of prayer. If children daily observe this two-fold love in their parents, under the influence of divine grace it will also be developed in them; they will grow up in piety and the fear of God and edify their fellow-creatures by their virtuous conduct.

PERORATION.

It is therefore good to have a Rosary, but it is far better to recite it. The Rosary you carry about with you is a testimony of your Catholic faith; it reminds you of many doctrines and truths, the consideration of which cannot fail to be of practical benefit to you. The Rosary is one of the best means of securing for

yourselves the protection of the Blessed Mother of God and of obtaining many and great graces and favors through her intercession. Honor and esteem the Rosary and accustom yourselves always to carry it with you; recite it often, especially on Saturday, that day being particularly dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. Participate also diligently in the devotions of the Rosary generally held on the first Sunday of the month, but whenever you recite it, try to say it with devotion and with a pure or at least a contrite heart, that you may experience the efficacy of this prayer in life and in death and under the protection of Mary happily attain heaven. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

THE ROSARY A VERY EXCELLENT PRAYER IN HONOR OF MARY, IF RECITED WITH RECOLLECTION AND DEVOTION.

He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord.—*Prov.* **8:35.**

In the gospel a woman, lifting up her voice in the praise of the divine Mother, cries out with enthusiasm: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee.* Mary, the Blessed Mother of God, deserves to be praised, honored and glorified by the whole world, for if we venerate the angels and saints, who are only servants of God, and announce their praise throughout the world, how can we refuse our veneration and homage to the Blessed Virgin, who as Mother of God possesses a dignity transcending that of the angels and saints? The Church also desires that we should venerate Mary: for this reason she has instituted and approved so many festivals in her honor, together with a multitude of devotions which have for their object her veneration. One of these festivals is the feast of the Rosary, which we celebrate to-day. The Rosary, which is daily said millions of times throughout all Christendom, is indeed a prayer by which we especially honor Mary. Let us reflect on this at length, and consider that **the Rosary is**—

I. A very excellent prayer in honor of Mary,
II. If well recited.

Part I.

The Rosary is a form of prayer consisting of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the doxology, or Glory be to the Father, etc., and of short contemplations of the mysteries of oui redemption. In all these constituent parts of the Rosary we honor and glorify the Blessed Mother of God in a special manner, as we shall proceed to show.

1. First, we say the *Apostles' Creed,* which in a few words contains all the principal truths of the faith, which the Apostles at the command of Christ announced to the whole world. In it we profess with a believing heart that we receive and hold -what Jesus Christ has taught and what he proposes to our faith by his Church, and that we are determined to live and die in this faith. Now tell me, is it not a great honor for Mary to be the Mother of a Son whom we adore as the Son of God, and as the eternal infallible truth? In the second and third article of the Creed we say: *And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.* What an honor for Mary, when we consider that unheard of miracle, that God, the heavenly Father, chose her to become the Mother of his Son; that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, assumed human nature within her through the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, and that she became a Mother without ceasing to be a pure virgin! And how much do we honor the Blessed Virgin when we say: *Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.* With these words we profess that Mary co-operated most effectively in the work of our redemption, because she consented to the sufferings and death of her Son, as, according to the will of God, she recognized it to be necessary for our redemption. This should convince you that we honor Mary very highly when we begin the Rosary by saying the Apostles' Creed.

2. The Apostles' Creed is followed by the Lord's prayer, or the *Our Father.* How honorable and joyful too is this prayer for the Virgin Mother of God! You know that she most tenderly loves her divine Son. Now when we say the Lord's prayer, she hears that prayer which first came from the lips of her dearly beloved Son! What joy, what honor for her! We say the *Our Father* as well as the whole Rosary for love of Mary, and with a view to venerate her. Consequently, we honor Mary particularly as often as we repeat the *Oiir Father* in the Rosary. Moreover, it is knowm with what great zeal she was inflamed for the honor of God. She wished for the tongues of angels and men in order to love and praise God and to glorify and make known his greatness,

glory, power and goodness to all the world. Do we not fulfil one of her most ardent wishes when we say: *Hallotoed be thy name?* Do we not, whilst honoring God first, honor Mary at the same time, when we do what she so ardently desires? You know how tenderly Mary loves all men and how much she desires us to work out our salvation. The countless pains and sufferings which she took upon herself as Mother of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, are evident proofs of this. What joy must her maternal heart experience when she hears us say: *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.* And do we not profess, as often as we say the *Our Father* in the Rosary, that Mary is our most powerful intercessor before the throne of God, through whose mediation God gives us all that we ask of him in the *Our Father?* It is evident therefore that we honor and glorify the Mother of God in a special manner by the *Our Father* in the Rosary.

3. Next follows the *Angelical Salutation,* or the *Hail Mary* which consists of two parts, viz., a *salutation,* and a *petition.*

(a.) The salutation is: *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* This salutation is not an invention of man; no, it was brought from heaven by the Archangel Gabriel, one of the most exalted angels before the throne of God, and he delivered it to Mary. Neither is it an invention of the angel, but the word of God, because the gospel emphatically says: "The Angel Gabriel was sent from God ... to a virgin .... and the virgin's name was Mary."—*Luke* 1: 26, 27. What an honor for Mary, since it was God himself who greeted her with the words: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." And when we address this salu-

highly honored, but none of them is called "full of grace." The angels of heaven are more highly favored than men, but even among them there is none of whom it is said that he is "full of grace." When we call Mary "full of grace," we elevate her above the angels and saints; we say that she is nearest to God, and consequently the dearest to him of all his creatures. He who comprehends the meaning of this also understands how much we honor Mary when we say: *Hail, Mary, full of grace!*

Further on we say: *The Lord is with thee.* The Lord, it is true, is with all his saints, he dwells in them, gives them his love, often fills them with heavenly consolation, always bestows new graces upon them. But he is with Mary in a far more excellent manner; she stands in the most intimate connection with the triune God. God the Father is with her, for he preserved her, as the future Mother of his Son, from the stain of original sin, and bestowed upon her a superabundance of graces; God the Son is with her, for he assumed flesh of her and loved her most dearly; God the Holy Ghost is with her, because by his power he effected in her the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Can we honor Mary more than when we address her in the words of the angel: *The Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women,* for by these words we declare: As long as the world has existed there has never been a woman so highly honored by heaven as thou, O Holy Virgin, and no woman will come after thee who shall equal thee; thou art the happiest of all the daughters of Eve. The words of the angel: "Blessed art thou among women", were also said by her cousin Elizabeth, who gives the reason why Mary is blessed amongst women when she adds: *And blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* We call Mary the happiest of her sex, because she alone was considered worthy to become the Mother of God.

(Æ.) We now come to the second part of the Angelic Salutation containing the *'petition.* In it we say; *Holy Mary.* We call Mary holy in the highest sense of the word—holier than the angels and saints; we repeatedly pronounce her name, for, as St. Bernard says, this name is of such power and glory that when it is pronounced the heavens shout, the earth exults, and the angels rejoice. We add: *Mother of God,* and thereby express that there is no creature in heaven or on earth equal to the Blessed Virgin in dignity, and finally, we ask her to intercede for us sinners as long as we live, and especially in the hour of our death, for we place our whole confidence in God, and hope that through her intercession he will impart to us all the graces which we need in life and in death, Thus in the second part of the Angelic Salutation also we honor Mary, because we praise her as the Mother of God, place our whole confidence in her, and recommend ourselves to her protection and intercession in life and in death.

4. The Rosary is divided into three parts, the well-known *joyful, sorrowful andglorious mysteries.* All these mysteries have reference to our redemption, for they briefly contain what Jesus Christ has done in order to redeem and save mankind; Mary is also mentioned in them, because she is the Mother of her Lord and Redeemer, and as such co-operates in the work of **our re-**

demption. In the *joyful mysteries* we especially venerate Mary as the Mother of our Redeemer, admire her dignity and the virtues which she practiced as Mother of God, particularly her love for God and her neighbor, her humility and chastity, and her tender solicitude for her divine Child. In the *sorrowful mysteries* we direct our eyes to Jesus, our suffering and dying Redeemer, but we remember also his holy Mother Mary, because she endured in her heart all that her dear Son suffered in his body. We venerate Mary in these mysteries as the sorrowful Mother, compassionate her in her nameless sorrow and grief, admire the magnanimity and love with which she sacrificed the dearest object of all her hopes, and praise and thank her for this sacrifice. Finally, in the *glorious mysteries* we contemplate the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, Mary's Assumption into heaven and her Coronation, and thereby prepare for the blessed Mother of God, as it were, a twofold joy by meditating upon the glory of her Son and her own glory Thus fifteen mysteries in connection with the great central mystery are selected as objects of meditation. In honor of each, the *Our Father* is said once, followed by the *Hail Mary* ten times. The whole Rosary, therefore, consists of the *Our Father,* said fifteen times, and the *Hail Mary,* one hundred and fifty times. We do this amongst other things, in order to profess our inability to worthily praise and glorify the Mother of God, and by the frequent repetition of her praises to accomplish, as much as possible, what is impossible by saying the *Hail Mary* only once. Thus the Rosary is a special prayer in honor of the Blessed Mother of God, *provided it is said well.*

We must say the Rosary—

1. *With a pure or at least with a contrite heart.*

(a.) If you wish to say the Rosary with a pure heart, you must be in a state of grace, that is, you must be free from mortal sin. If you knowingly live in mortal sin you are an enemy of Christ, and crucify him anew. Judge for yourselves, how could Mary find pleasure in the prayer of a person who, like the unbelieving and obstinate Jews, crucifies her dearest Son? A certain pious youth said fifteen *Hail Marys* daily in honor of the Blessed Mother of God, and experienced great consolation in this devotion. One day he had the misfortune to fall into a grievous sin; he, however, practiced this devotion as before, but without the former consolation. Filled with sorrow he said to

Mary: "O Mary, either thou hast become another mother, or my prayer no longer pleases thee." An angel of wondrous beauty appeared to him, and offered him precious fruits, but in an unclean vessel, and said: "Take and eat, the Blessed Mother of God has sent this fruit to you." The youth replied: "The fruit is indeed very inviting, but the unclean vessel fills me with disgust." The angel said: "Behold, your prayer is of itself pleasing to the Mother of God, but because your soul is defiled with the leprosy of sin, she takes no pleasure in your petition." The prayer of the sinner, therefore, according to this legend, does not please the Mother of God; therefore, you should be solicitous to have a clean heart that she may graciously accept your devotion.

(3.) But should a person who lives in a state of sin no longer say the Rosary? By no means, he should say it frequently, but with a *contrite heart;* that is, he must sincerely repent of his sins, humbly ask pardon of God, resolve to confess as soon as possible, and be determined to amend his life. Such a penitent says the Rosary in a good and profitable manner, and Mary, the Mother of mercy, the refuge of sinners, receives his prayer with pleasure. Although he can obtain no supernatural merit through the Rosary, because he is deprived of sanctifying grace, Mary will procure for him the grace of conversion, provided he is determined to amend his life. "This Mother of Mercy is full of benignity and love, not only towards the just but also towards sinners and those in despair. When she sees that they too have recourse to her, when she notices that they sincerely seek her aid, she immediately comes to their assistance, receives them graciously and obtains for them forgiveness of her Son. She despises no one, however unworthy he may be; she denies no one her assistance. She consoles all; it is sufficient to invoke her in order to experience her help. By her graciousness she often kindles, even in the hearts of sinners, devotion towards herself, and rouses from the sleep of sin those who are the farthest removed from God and deeply sunk in the mire of sins. In such a way she prepares sinners for the reception of divine graces, and thus finally they become participants of eternal salvation."—*Blosius.*

2. *Diligently.*

Ycu are not obliged to recite the Rosary every day as the priest does his breviary; but if you say it *often* and *properly,* you say it diligently. Come to church when the Rosary is said publicly by the priest and the people, and make your children assist at this devotion. During the time when it is said in church no one should read a prayer-book or say any other prayer; the com-

mon devotion of the Rosary in church is a prayer for all, for the high and the low, for the learned and the unlearned; it would be an indication of stubbornness and pride, if one declined to join in the prayer, and occupied one's self with some other devotion. On Sunday evenings in the long winter nights, especially in Advent and Lent, the pious habit of your parents and ancestors of saying the Rosary should not be allowed to become obsolete. Say the Rosary *properly,* articulate distinctly the words in the *Creed,* the *Our Father* and the *Hail Alary;* insert the respective mysteries according to the ecclesiastical seasons; conduct yourselves modestly, quietly, as becomes a Christian during prayer, and beware of gazing about, of laughing, or otherwise misbehaving during this devotion, for by so doing instead of honoring God and the Blessed Virgin you would offend them.

3. *Devoutly.* In order to recite the Rosary devoutly, you must observe two things especially:

(λ.) First, before you begin the Rosary, you **ust collect your** thoughts and direct them to God and the Blessed Virgin, and then when you pray, keep your thoughts collected as much as possible. If during prayer you should yield to every distraction, the reproach of the Lord would be applicable to you: "This people honoreth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me." —*Matt.* 15: 8. Say the Rosary with interior recollection and attention; if you become distracted do not voluntarily entertain the distraction, out recollect yourself again and repeat this as often as a distraction returns. Involuntary distractions are not sinful, and neither do they lessen the merit of the Rosary, nor of any prayer. God is indulgent and patient with our weakness and is satisfied with our good will. Hear how the Blessed Virgin once consoled St. Bridget, who suffered much on account of distractions and temptations in prayer. "My daughter," she said to her, "whatever temptation may torment you during prayer persevere as much as you can in the desire, the good will and the holy endeavor to pray well; your desire and pious endeavor will obtain for you the merit of prayer."

(3.) Secondly, when you say the Rosary you must have the earnest desire to honor Mary and to cause her joy thereby. When have you this earnest desire? I reply only when you live as you pray, or in other words, when you carry out what you utter with the lips in saying the Rosary. But there is the difficulty with many. They <ay in the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in God the Father," and thereby express that it is God the Father from whom they have existence, from whom they receive numberless benefits. But if they are ungrateful children of God, abuse his bene*

fits and violate his holy commandments, they do not earnestly mean what they say; how then can they honor Mary and cause her joy, if she sees that they offend God, whom she loves above all? They say in the *Our Father:* "Hallowed be thy name," and know that the name of God is dishonored and profaned by every sin, especially by cursing and blaspheming. When they so frequently allow themselves to give way to angry passions and use bad language, how can they say that they are in earnest with their petition: "Hallowed be thy name." And how can they honor Mary when they dishonor God? They say in the *Ave Maria:* "Hail Mary!" and they lead a vicious life and have no will to amend that life or to do penance. Do they not act as Judas did when he kissed Jesus and said: Hail, Master!—*Matt.* 26: 49. Is it to be expected that such a salutation will please Mary? These examples should convince us that only those earnestly desire to honor Mary by the Rosary who endeavor to lead a pious, virtuous life. Such persons say it with great profit; they honor and please Mary by their prayer, and experience to their great consolation what a good mother she is in life and in death.

PERORATION.

You have learned that the Rosary is a prayer which gives especial honor and glory to Mary in all its constituent parts, viz., the *Apostles' Creed,* the *Our Father,* the *Angelic Salutation* and the mysteries. But that you may really honor Mary by the Rosary you must recite it well. She takes pleasure in the prayer of those only who have a pure or at least a contrite heart. Therefore never recite the Rosary except with a pure or at least a contrite heart; endeavor at the same time to keep your thoughts collected during prayer and to banish all distractions as much as possible; practice in deed what you say in words, and lead a life that will be an honor to the Blessed Virgin and to her Son. If you observe these rules in saying the Rosary it will obtain for you many blessings. Mary will be a good Mother to you in life and in death, and the words will be fulfilled in you which the Church represents her as saying: "He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord." Amen.

THIRD SKETCH.

THE ROSARY HONORS MARY AND IS USEFUL TO US.

Upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all the day, and all the night, they shall never hold their peace.—Is. **62: 6.**

Josue was victorious over the Amalekites because Moses lifted up his hands in prayer to God. The same occurred at a later period *of* time, at the battle of Lepanto. The Turks were defeated by the Christians, not so much by the valor of their arms as by the Rosary, not so much by the bravery of the soldiers as by the watchmen who were placed upon the walls of the Church, where day and night they raised their hearts and hands to God in prayer, which moved Mary to show herself terrible to her enemies, like an army in battle array. In honor of the glorious victory over the Turks on this day, the Popes have ordered this event to be celebrated as the feast of the Rosary, and have granted many indulgences to the faithful, in order to induce them to recite the Rosary frequently and devoutly. In fact, the Rosary is one of the best, most beautiful and powerful forms of prayer which we have in the Church. The devotion of the Rosary—

I. Honors Mary, and is
IL Useful to us.

Part I.

As Christ taught us how we should pray to God, in order to be heard by him, so God made known to us the words by which he wishes his Mother to be honored. He believed us to be, as it were, incapable of praising and glorifying Mary as she deserves, and for this reason he sent an angel from heaven to teach us and to be to us a model of devotion to the Blessed Virgin which we should imitate. Can we give greater praise to the Blessed Virgin than that with which the Archangel Gabriel saluted her? Can human eloquence add anything to this praise? And since we salute and honor her with the very words of the angel we may justly say that our devotion to her is an honor, and the honor we give her is reasonable and holy. The Rosary is composed of the *Our Father,* the *Hail Mary,* the *Creed* and the doxology—*Glory be to the Father,* etc., and thus at the very beginning of our devotion to Mary we mention God, the source of all holiness, knowing well that there is no other foundation in the Church than that which Christ has laid and that all honor and glory is to be given to God alone.

There is no mystery of our redemption in which angels have not participated. When the mystery of the Incarnation was to be made known to the Blessed Virgin, God commissioned the Archangel Gabriel to announce it. When the birth of the Man-God was to be announced to mankind, an angel descended from heaven, and said: "This night is born to you a Saviour;" when Jesus was to fly into Egypt, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream; when Christ was to be comforted in the garden of Olives, it was an angel who performed this act of charity, and when the Resurrection of Christ was to be made known, it was again an angel who removed the massive stone from the sepulchre and said to the astonished women: "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, he is risen, he is not here." Those, then, who recite the Rosary with attention and devotion may be compared to the angels, since they have learned from them, as it were, this way of praying. The whole Rosary contains fifteen mysteries, which are usually divided into three sets of five each. The first set comprises the mysteries preceding the passion, whidh are called the joyful mysteries; the second set comprises those which constitute the passion, and are called the sorrowful mysteries; and the third comprises the mysteries which followed the passion, and are called the glorious mysteries. In the first set of mysteries we meditate on the Annunciation; how the Archangel Gabriel came down from heaven to salute Mary as full of grace, announcing to her that she was to become the Mother of God; we then meditate on Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth, on the birth of Christ in the stable at Bethlehem, how he was presented in the temple, and how Mary and Joseph, on their return to Nazareth from Jerusalem, having lost Jesus at the age of twelve years, found him in the temple in the midst of the doctors. Whilst our thoughts are thus engaged meditating on each mystery we say the *Our Father* once, the *Hail Mary* ten times and the doxology once. In the second set we meditate on the chief circumstances of the bitter passion, the Agony in the garden of Gethsemane, the Scourging at the Pillar, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, and the Crucifixion. In the third set we contemplate the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord, his Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption and Coronation of the Blessed Virgin in heaven. We rejoice with the shepherds, adore with the wise men from the East, offer ourselves with Christ in the temple, and rejoice with Mary and Joseph at finding their lost Child. We mourn with the agonizing, betrayed, scourged, thorn-crowned, cross-laden and dying Redeemer; we rejoice at his Resurrection and Ascension, pray for the light of theHoly Ghost, and give thanks to God for assuming Mary into heaven and crowning her with the brightest diadem of glory, Of all these mysteries we compose a bouquet

and present it to Mary, praying her to offer it to God for us. And in order that Mary may accept these spiritual roses or Rosary, we repeat frequently the praises and titles which were given her by God himself through an angel.

We salute Mary with: *Hail, full of grace.* Not without good reason did the angel omit her name "Mary," saying instead: *Full of grace.* He wished thereby to intimate that the title "Full of grace" is more proper to her than her name, and due far more to her than the title "wise" was due to Solomon, "obedient" to Isaac, and "strong" to Sampson. *The Lord is with thee.* God is indeed everywhere, but he is in one way with men, and in another with irrational and inanimate beings; one way with the good, and another with the bad. He is with irrational beings without their knowledge, and with rational beings who know and acknowledge him; but he alone is with the good who know and love him. He is with the Blessed Virgin in a special manner; he is one with her *not only in the will but also in the flesh. The Lord is with, thee;* this is a prerogative that raises her above the angels. *Blessed art thou amongst women. She conceived,* but *without sin*; she brought forth *without pain* and *without knowing man;* to her great glory she is the *Mother of him whose Father is God;* she, the creature, became the *Mother of her Creator;* she became a *Mother,* without ceasing to be a *Virgin.* Had not the angel reason to say: *Blessed art thou among women*? Can we therefore honor the Blessed Virgin more than by praising her with the Angelic Salutation: *Blessed art thou among women?*

Part II.

The devotion of the Rosary will not be useful to us if we honor Mary with our lips only. Let us remember that we do not honor her by saying prayer carelessly, but by leading a good life and by never losing sight of her virtuous example. For how could we salute her with *Hail, full of grace,* if we lead a sinful life? how could we call her full of grace at a time when we are loaded with sins? how could we congratulate her with the words, *The Lord is with thee,* if we are forced to say of ourselves that God can not be with us on account of our sins? How could we say; *Blessed art thou among women,* and at the same time lead the life of a heathen, thereby calling down God's wrath upon us. In such a case it would be better and more profitable to omit everything else and say only, *Pray for us sinners.*

All the graces which we obtain from God we receive through Mary. The holy Fathers attribute to her the victory over hell,

the extirpation of heresies, the propagation of the Faith, and assert that God gives us no grace except through her, for what we cannot obtain through our own prayers is granted to us through her intercession. For this reason our holy mother the Church makes use of all possible means to cause the Blessed Virgin to be propitious to us; she celebrates her festivals with the greatest solemnity, establishes confraternities in her honor, enriches them with indulgences, and exhorts the faithful in all their necessities to have recourse to her powerful intercession. With this view she introduced the Rosary and urges all the faithful to salute her three times a day with the Angelic Salutation, because she is convinced that Mary by this salutation will obtain for us all the graces of which we stand in need, since by it she conceived the Author of all grace. We also comply with the wish of the Church by saying the Rosary, in which we beg for mercy and grace with one hundred and fifty *Hail Marys,* and thus sing the praises of Mary as David in his one hundred and fifty psalms sung the praises of God and besought him for mercy and grace. Who could adequately express the singular protection which the Church has experienced by the pious recitation of the Rosary? Assailed by numerous heresies under Calistus II. and Nicholas IV., God threatened the faithful with his judgments, when St. Dominic, like another Moses, approached the angry God with Rosary in hand and with this weapon succeeded in appeasing him. And. how often since has the Church experienced the wonderful effects of this prayer? The world is like a tempestuous ocean, on the billows of which the bark of Peter, the Church, is tossed to and fro by the storms of persecution. What does the Church do in all the dangers which surround her? She looks up to Mary, the Star of the sea, who always brings her safely into the harbor; she thinks of Mary and salutes her in the words of the angel, and under her protection braves all storms and dangers. And when she sees her children in danger, either of soul or body, in life or in death, does she not put the Rosary into their hands and commit them to Mary through whose intercession we obtain all graces? And when some by their sins have deserved punishment, does not the Rosary procure for them indulgences, whereby they can quench the flames of Purgatory?

Yet do not believe that the Rosary of itself will be able to obtain all graces for you. We must be free from mortal sin if we would obtain an indulgence, and we must strive to live a life of holiness if we desire to obtain the intercession of Mary. I must remind you of what experience teaches, namely, that there is nothing on earth, however good and holy, which is not subject to abuses. Thus there are people who think they cannot be lost if they say the Rosary, wear the Scapular, etc., though they lead a sinful life. This is a gross error.

PERORATION.

You can obtain everything through Mary's intercession, but you must not forget her words at the marriage feast at Cana: 'Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye." I accept your petition, she says, and I have already presented it to my Son, but do what he tells you, for unless you do so all my power with my Son will be of no avail for you. Obey the Son, if j >u wish his Mother to look down upon you with eyes of mercy. Carry the Rosary as the early Christians carried the gospel, on their breasts and in their hands; on their breast because they loved it, and in their hands because they practiced it. Do likewise; avoid sin, and walk before God in fear and trembling, in purity, humility and simplicity of heart. Amen.

FEAST OF THE HOEY GUARDIAN ANGELS.

FIRST SKETCH.

WHAT WE OWE OUR GUARDIAN ANGELS.

Far he hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.—Ps. 90: 11.

How good God is to men! He is not content with having created them, but after their fall he sent his only begotten Son into the world for their redemption; moreover, he gives to each of them an angel that he may accompany him in all his ways here below and in every possible manner assist him to save his soul. " God," says the Psalmist, "hath given his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." "Lord," we can here exclaim with David, " what is man, that thou art made known to him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him ?"—*Ps.* 143: 3. Thou hast exalted weak, miserable man above the angels, as it were, because according to thy will they minister unto him. And these heavenly spirits do not refuse to humble themselves to us men and to serve us. Now the question arises: What do we owe our holy guardian angels for all the love and solicitude with which they serve us and our temporal and eternal welfare? I shall answer this question for you to-day. We owe our holy guardiau angels—

I. Reverence on account of their presence;
II. Confidence on account of the protection they afford us.

Part I.

We owe reverence to our guardian angels on account of their presence. Wherever we go our guardian angels accompany us- They are with us—

1. *In church.* The patriarch Jacob once saw in a dream angels ascending and descending on a ladder which reached to heaven. The Holy Fathers interpret this wonderful vision as representing the angels ascending with our prayers to God in heaven, and descending with the graces obtained of God. St. Bernard says: "The angels offer to God not their own, but our good works; they present to him not their own, but our labors; they offer to him not their own, but our tears which we shed for our sins, and in return for them they bring us his gifts and blessings." Hence we also read in the Apocalypse (8: 3-5): "Another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, from the hand of the angel." Therefore, if we offer our prayer, this smoke of incense, in a golden censer, *t. c.,* in a clean heart, to our guardian angels, that they may present it before the throne, we may confidently hope that it will ascend before God as the smoke of incense and obtain for us in return benefits of every description. But if it happen that God does not favorably accept and hear our prayer, it is not the fault of our guardian angels, but our own. How often do we pray in church without devotion, in a cold and distracted manner. Should our guardian angels present such a prayer before God and ask him to hear it? Should we not expect that God would reject them when they appear before him with such petitions? Do not forget then as often as you are in church that you are in holy company, that your guardian angels surround and watch you. Therefore always behave quietly, reverently and modestly in church, as becomes good, faithful Christians, and endeavor to pray well and devoutly, that God may vouchsafe to receive your prayer and graciously hear it,

2. *Out of church.* We read in the gospel that "the Son of Man shall send his angels: and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals."—*Matt.* 13: 41. These angels are our guardian angels; the kingdom is made up of the members of the Catholic Church, the orthodox Christians; the scandals are the sinful works of Christians. Now, as our holy guardian angels are commissioned by Christ to gather our sinful works, it is evident that they turn their eyes towards us wherever we may be and watch over us under all circumstances. Moreover, they are strictly commanded by God to follow us in all our ways and to protect us, as the Psalmist expressly says; "He has given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." This charge our guardian angels undert ke with the greatest readiness for God's sake, because his will is everything to them, aud for their own

sake, because they desire most ardently that we should occupy the places of the rebellious angels who were cast into hell. Now as the holy guardian angels everywhere watch over to us we should conduct ourselves becomingly in their presence and walk in such a way as not to offend them. Woe to us if on account of the sins which we commit in their presence we render ourselves unworthy of their protection and incur their displeasure! On the day of judgment instead of being our friends and intercessors, they will be our adversaries and accusers, and will call down upon us the judgments of God. Remember this, you God-forsaken people, who under the veil of night cover your debaucheries and sins against the sixth commandment, and seek hiding-places wherein to gratify your abominable desires unseen by men; you may hide yourselves wherever you please, but you cannot withdraw yourselves from the eyes of your guardian angels. They accompany you everywhere—into the secret haunts of sin, and are witnesses of the crimes you commit. Remember this, you frivolous people, who indulge in obscene discourses and jests; when you are in company, your guardian angels are beside you, filled with holy indignation at the shameful things you utter. Remember this, you quarrelsome, angry Christians, who frequently for the sake of a trifle become excited, give vent to curses, imprecations and blasphemies and abuse persons who have given you no offense whatever. Your guardian angels see and hear what you do and say and turn from you in disgust. Remember this, you drunkards, who so frequently indulge to such an extent that you conduct yourselves worse than irrational beasts. Your guardian angels are justly indignant when they see that you so debase yourselves and forget your dignity as men and Christians, and, as it were, trample it in the dust. Never forget the presence of your guardian angels, carefully guard against injustice and sin that you may not offend them and render yourselves unworthy of their protection. At all times and under all circumstances, be pious, moral and holy, that the guardian angels may look down upon you with pleasure and never withdraw their favor and love from you.

Part II.

We owe oiir guardian angels confidence on account of the ***protection they afford us.*** They protect us—

i. *In perils of the body.* We have proofs thereof in—

(a.) *Many passages of the Sacred Scripture.* "Behold, I will send my angel, who shall go before thee and keep thee in thy journey,

and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned: for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and my name is in him. But if thou wilt hear his voice, and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy of thy enemies, and will afflict them that afflict thee."—*Exod.* 23; 20-23. "For my angel is with you, and I myself will demand an account of your souls."—*Baruch* 6: 6. "He hath given his angels charge over thee; to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."—*Ps. go:* 11, 12.

(Λ) *Examples of Holy Writ.* God had decreed to destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, together with their inhabitants. Two angels came to Lot and conducted him and his family out of Sodom. And, behold, they were scarcely in safety when a rain of fire and sulphur destroyed those cities with all that were in them. Nabuchodonosor, the king, ordered the three youths Ananias, Azarias and Misael, to be cast into a fiery furnace, heated seven times stronger than usual, because they would not adore the statue of gold. Who will save them? The angel of the Lord. "But the angel of the Lord went down with Azarias and his companions into the furnace, and he drove the flame of the fire out of the furnace. And made the midst of the furnace like the blowing of a wind bringing dew: and the fire touched them not at all, nor troubled them, nor did them any harm"—*Dan. U!* 49: 50. How lovingly the Archangel Raphael protected young Tobias! He accompanied him on his journey to Rages, delivered him from the attack of the fish, which rose from the river Tigris to devour him, and prevented the evil spirit who had strangled the seven men in Raguel's house from doing him any harm. Of St. Peter we know that his guardian angel delivered him from the prison in which he was confined, bound in chains.

{ci) Example from History. Radislas, prince of Gurmia, invaded the dominions of St. Wenceslaus with a formidable army. Wenceslaus, anxious to maintain peace, sent a messenger to him, desiring to know what provocation he had given him, and declaring that he was ready to accept any terms that were consistent with his duty to God and his people. Radislas regarded this embassy as a proof of cowardice, and instantly replied that the surrender of Bohemia was the only condition on which he would hear of peace. Wenceslaus, finding himself obliged to take up arms, marched against the invader. When the two armies drew near to each other, our saint desired a conference with Radislas, and proposed that, in order to spare the blood of so many innocent persons, it would be a good expedient to leave the issue

of the affair to a single combat between them. Radislas accepted the proposal, imagining himself secure of the victory. The two princes accordingly met at the head of their armies in order to put an end to the war by this duel. Wenceslaus was but slightly armed with a short sword and a shield, yet, making the sign of the cross, marched boldly towards his antagonist. Radislas attempted to throw a javelin at him, but saw two angels protecting the saint. Whereupon he threw down his arms, and falling on his knees begged his pardon and declared himself at his disposal.

2. *In perils of our soul.* The soul is of more value than the body, for whilst the body is mortal and returns to dust and ashes, the soul is immortal and eternal; the fate of the soul will be the fate of the body. If the soul be saved and glorified in heaven, the body also will partake of her glory, but if the soul be condemned to hell, the body, too, will be delivered to perdition. Hence there is no doubt that the holy guardian angels protect us far more in dangers of the soul than in those of the body.

(æ.) *Our interior inspirations Prove this.* We often feel within us a strong inclination to evil. The enemy of our salvation endeavors to make us believe, as he deluded Eve, that that to which he entices us will not be hurtful, but profitable to us. Our holy guardian angel then raises her voice and cries out to us: Do not do it, it is sinful, you will offend God and make yourself miserable for time and eternity. The world often persuades us to visit this or that place, to frequent this society, to participate in that pleasure, under the delusion that there is nothing wrong in it. But our guardian angel protests against these suggestions and allurements of the world, and says: No, no, absent yourself from that society, do not indulge in that pleasure, you run the risk of losing your innocence and virtue, as has happened to thousands before you. The flesh often moves and entices us to pride, impurity, revenge, etc. Here it is the guardian angel again that rises up against the allurements of the flesh and vividly represents to us how wrongly we would act. Should we yield to them he it is who cries out to us in the words of the Holy Ghost: "Go not after thy lusts: but turn away from thy own will. If thou give to thy soul her desire, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies."—*Ecclus.* 18: 30, 31. Such is the solicitude with which the holy guardian angels watch over our soul; so great is the care they take that she may not fall into the hands of her enemies and perish.

(5.) *History.* Patroclus led a very holy, secluded life, and for many years taught children gratuitously, in order thereby to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He had al-

ready attained a high degree of Christian perfection. All at once he was most violently tempted to return into the world, and he would have consented to the temptation if his guardian angel had not succored him. He made him ascend to the top of a tall pillar and contemplate the miserable spectacle of the world. What did his eyes behold? Robberies, murders, adulteries, intrigues of every kind and countless other wicked things, and finally, the miserable results of all this. Patroclus, having seen this, wept and was neverafterwards tempted to leave his solitude. We read something similar of a monk in Cologne, named Liffard, who, though a descendant of a renowned noble family, humbly served for many years in the capacity of porter. As the end of his life drew near the devil tempted him most violently to leave the monastery, where he had never enjoyed any of the comforts of life, and to go home in order to pass the remainder of his days in ease and tranquillity. The tempter even succeded in making him resolve to leave the monastery. But the night before accomplishing his design his angel guardian appeared to him and conducted him to a cemetery where he opened the grave of a man who had recently died, and said to him: "Behold, Liffard, you will soon be what this corpse is." The sight of the putrefied body and the earnest words of the angel produced so deep an impression upon Liffard that he at once relinquished the idea of leaving the monastery, and spent the remainder of his days in the fervent service of God. We certainly, then, have every reason to place confidence in our holy guardian angels, because they protect us with such great love and solicitude in all dangers of body and soul Let us recommend ourselves daily to their care and invoke them, especially in every temptation; let us also give heed to their suggestions and inspirations.

peroration.

In conclusion I would recall to your mind the words of St. Bernard: "What should we fear under the protection of such mighty angels? Those who protect us in all our ways can neither be overcome nor corrupted, much less can they corrupt us. They are faithful, they are wise, they are powerful. Why, then, should we tremble? Therefore, let us follow them and attach ourselves to them. Let us reverence them as they are everywhere present, and let us never do anything which will cause us to fear them, or make them ashamed of us." "Let us shun sin; for as smoke drives away the pigeons, and a bad odor the bees, so deplorable and abominable sin drives away our angels, the guardians of our life."—*Si. Basil.* Let us willingly follow the guidance of our holy guardian angels and serve God with fervor and persever

ance as they do, that after this life we may have the happiness of being united with them in heaven and of praising God **with** them for all eternity. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

WHAT THE GUARDIAN ANGEL SAYS TO THOSE OVER WHOM HE HAS CHARGE.

*Behold, **I** mill send my angel, mho shall go before thee.* ***Take notice of him, and hear his voice.***—*Exod.* **23 : 20, 21.**

Have you ever seriously reflected on these words of the Lord? It is God himself who utters them, and says: "Behold, O man, how solicitous I am for you. Even an angel I will send to you, one of those heavenly spirits who stand around my throne and adore me most profoundly, he shall always be with you, shall lead you through the dangerous journey of this earthly life and offer you a helping hand so that you may surmount all obstacles to salvation and safely arrive at your journey's end. But give heed to him, and hear his voice. Do not forget that your angel is always with you, and that I have charged him to admonish you to good, and to restrain you from all evil; therefore lend a willing ear to his inspirations, and do what he requires of you through your parents, superiors and pastors." What then does the guardian angel say to men? He says to each one in particular that which best suits the state of his soul, whatever is most useful and necessary for him. Let us, then, consider today what the guardian angel says to those over whom he has charge:

I. To him who is still in a state of innocence;
II. To him who is really converted;
III. To him who is in a state of sin.

Part I.

No doubt most of you have seen the picture in which two roads are represented; one is a broad, flower strewn road which leads downward into the jaws of a dragon vomiting fire; the other, a narrow, thorny path which leads upward, and on it is an

angel leading a child and pointing towards heaven with his right hand. This is the picture of the guardian angel, and we understand at once what the angel is saying to his innocent charge.

1. The angel pointing towards heaven seems to say: Behold, there above is your home, there is the place which the divine Saviour has prepared for you, that happy place, where no complaint is heard, no tears flow, where all pain and grief are at an end, where all danger has vanished, and where nothing can harm you any more; there is the place where the elect enjoy a happiness compared to which all the enjoyments of the children of the world are a mere nothing—a happiness which will last without interruption for all eternity. There above in heaven God the Father who created you, God the Son who redeemed you, and God the Holy Ghost who sanctified you, await you; countless brothers and sisters are there longing for you, and with joy think of the moment when they can clasp you in their arms and admit you into their society. Thus the angel, pointing with his right hand toward heaven, speaks to his protégé of the unspeakable felicity which awaits him in heaven, and urges him to preserve his innocence and to remain pious and virtuous all his life.

2. Again, the angel looking at the narrow path overgrown with thorns and leading upward, says: Behold, the way that leads to heaven is narrow, thorny, and strait, but it is short; you need not walk it many hundred years, as people did in the primitive ages of the world; after a few years you will have run the course. It may appear arduous to walk on this path, but have courage; in my hands I shall bear you up as often as necessary, lest you dash your foot against a stone; God will sustain you with his grace, that without much labor you may bear the difficulties connected with his service; in truth, the consolation which he pours into your heart will render light that which seems most difficult. Think of your glorified brethren and sisters, how they rejoice because they bravely and constantly walked on the strait and narrow road which led them to the eternal repose of heaven. Follow them, heaven is worth all.

3. The angel now turns the eye of his charge to the broad road, and says to him: My child, on this level road, strewn with roses, you behold a multitude of people who are all joyous and merry, but be not deceived, you know what Christ says: "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction; and many there are who go in thereat."—*Matt.* η\ 13. How miserable you would render yourselt, if you should exchange the narrow path, on which you now walk, for the broad road; you would share the fate of those deluded and spiritually blind persons, who live in levity and for-

getfulness of God and are delivered to eternal perdition. If you should be tempted to make common cause with the children of the world, and to participate in their dissipations and vices, say to yourself: "That which delights is but transitory, that which burns, eternal."

4. Finally, the angel directs the attention of his charge to the terrible dragon who devours all who approach him and says; Know, my child, every one who would seduce you to a mortal sin is such a dragon; if you trust him you will be lost. As often as any one allures you to something sinful, think of this dragon with his mouth open to swallow you, and flee at once and as far as you can; come to me and cry aloud for help. So long as you listen to me and are faithful to me, you need fear nothing. God has given me power to defend you against all your enemies, if you only obey me. But, continues the angel, there are many such dragons; some are within you, some without you, some around you; they are the world, the flesh, and the devil. If they suggest to you to enter upon that broad road and to gather the roses strewn thereon, do not listen to them and do not yield to their suggestions. Be not deceived by them, if they tell you that this or that is no sin, because others do it, listen rather to me who cry out to you: It is a sin, a great sin, do not yield to it; otherwise you will make yourself miserable for time and eternity. O my child, by all my love for you, by your immortal soul, and by the precious blood of Christ, I conjure you, take my words to heart. Be not deceived, remain faithful to me and preserve your innocence. Thus the holy guardian angel speaks to every soul that has the happiness of still possessing baptismal innocence. O all you who are of the number of those favored souls, heed the voice of your good angel and always do what he tells you. Let us hear now what th- guardian angel says to those *who are truly converged.*

Part II.

Imagine in the picture which has been shown you a Christian who has lost his baptismal innocence by grievous sins, but recovered again by true repentance the love and grace of God and the right to heaven. With such a one too the guardian angel is well pleased, and joyfully guides him on his penitential path. We need not wonder at this, for Christ himself says that there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.—*Luke* 15 : 10. To such a one also the angel shows heaven, which is now again open for him, and hell, which has now no more claims upon him, and admonishes him to adhere firmly to

the grace which he has recovered and never to forfeit it at any price.

i. "Behold," he says to him in the words of Christ, "thou art made whole: sin no more, lest some worse thing- happen to thee." —*John* 5: 14. With the help of divine grace you have left the broad road that leads to destruction and entered upon the narrow road that leads to life. How happy you are once more! It is true, you are not the same that you were when you still possessed your baptismal innocence, for you have forfeited for ever the consolation of never having offended your Lord and God; what is done is done, and can never be undone. The way of penance, moreover, is far rougher than the way of innocence, for on the former you must take upon yourself many penitential exercises in order to make at least some reparation for offenses offered to God. Call to mind the austerities to which many penitents condemned themselves. St. Peter, who had sinned only once, wept so much over his sin that the constantly flowing tears formed furrow's in his cheeks. St. Mary Magdalene, after the Ascension of our Lord, chose a cavern for her habitation and there spent thirty years in the most austere penance, constantly bewailing her sins. The holy penitent Thais after her conversion retired to an out-of-the-way place, prostrated herself upon the ground and cried out: "O thou who hast created me, have mercy on me." You, my child must imitate these penitents, at least in such a manner that you practice some mortifications and works of penance in satisfaction for your sins.—The penitent usually has also greater struggles and temptations than the innocent person; for the old passions and bad habits frequently arise with great violence and endeavor to gain the upper hand; the world, too, and the devil, make strenuous efforts to recover the soul rescued from them by the grace of God. But do not lose courage on that account. Only be of good will and do your share; God who has commenced the good work will also bring it to a favorable issue. If you are faithful to your promises God will impart to you greater consolation than the world with all its pleasures and joys can procure for you. Consider Mary Magdalene, Peter and Paul, Mary of Egypt, Margaret of Cortona, and other faithful penitents, how our Lord comforted them in all their struggles and sufferings, and how sweet to them were even their tears. And though he should sometimes withdraw his consolation, encourage yourself with the thought that you are a child of God and an heir of heaven. Finally, my child, what can be hard or difficult for you, when you consider that you have deserved hell with all its torments? Should you not say with St. Augustine: "Lord, here cut, here burn, but spare me in eternity." Thus the guardian angel speaks to the converted soul in order to encourage

and strengthen her, that she may walk constantly in the way of penance.

2. And if he observe that his charge casts longing eyes upon the flowery path of the children of the world and is in danger of heeding the enticements to sin, of renewing sinful relations and of falling into the snares of Satan, he again raises his voice and cries out to him in terrible earnestness: God has once come to your assistance and rescued you from perdition; who knows if he will do it again? For thousands of others he has not done *x** to relapse into sin, to die an unhappy death, and to be buried in hell was with them one and the same thing. Do not say "only once more, then I shall go to confession and never commit this sin again." Thousands have spoken thus and are now burning in hell. In order to confess properly one needs time and grace. Who can assure you that you will have both? May you not die any moment, without being able to receive the holy sacraments? Must you not fear, when you thus presume upon the mercy of God, that he will withdraw his efficacious grace from you, **and** that even if you confess before you die, you will remain in sin and perish? Away, then, with all levity, close your ears to the allurements of sin, and withdraw yourself from everything that will endanger your eternal salvation. Consider seriously that when there is a question of your soul and your salvation, you cannot be too circumspect; therefore avoid nothing with greater care than a relapse into sin. Make a diligent use of the means given you for your salvation; pray devoutly, especially in every temptation, hear and read the word of God, lead a retired life, reflect often upon the vanity of all things earthly and upon the four last things to be remembered; go to confession and communion as often as possible, and I assure you that you will overcome every temptation and happily persevere in penance to the end. And now let us hear what the guardian **angel says to** him *who is in a state of sin, andperseveres therein.*

Part **HI.**

i. First, I must observe that the guardian angel does not lead by the hand one who lives in carelessness and forgetfulness of God; such a one will not hear of his guardian angel, he rejects the hand extended to him, neither does he walk on the narrow path, but on the broad, flowery, road leading into the dragon's mouth of bel·, which awaits the moment when it can devour its victim. But the good angel does not altogether depart from such a one, his love for him will not let him rest nor be silent, he fol- **lows him at least at a distance and does all he can to rescue him**

from perdition. For this purpose he avails himself of every op' portunity.

2. If parents, priests and other well-meaning people administer to such an unfortunate soul wholesome admonitions, the holy guardian angel corroborates them and says to him: Yes, they are right, they have the best of intentions towards you, they desire to rescue you from perdition; listen to them and do what they tell you. Consider that obduracy of heart is a sin against the Holy Ghost and take to heart the words of the Apostle: "Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to thy hardness, and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God."—*Rom.* 2: 4, 5.

3. The guardian angel's voice is particularly loud when a sudden death occurs; when some one loses his life from heart disease, apoplexy, etc., or by an accident, without being able to receive the rites of the Church. Then he says to him: If you were this or that one, how would matters stand with you? Ah, you would have died an unhappy death and been eternally damned. Oh, return from your evil ways whilst you have time. Have you not yet sufficiently offended God who has heretofore shown so much mercy and benignity towards you? Will you not desist from your sins and vices by which you crucify anew that Saviour who died for you on the cross? Oh, do not forget the words of Holy Writ: "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For his wrath will come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee."—*Ecclus.* 5: 8, 9.

4. The guardian angel speaks to the sinner when he is alone, when he is perhaps passing a sleepless night, when the passions are under control and when he can hope that his words will fall upon a susceptible heart. Oh poor, deluded child of man, he says to him, are you better off under the dominion of the devil than you formerly were in the service of God? You imagine that riches, honors, dignities, pleasures and joys can render you truly happy and contented, you look upon them as beautiful, sweet-smelling roses, and do not notice that in the end they are nothing but sharp thorns. How many cares, how much disquietude and remorse of conscience are occasioned by the possession of unjust goods which Christ properly compares to sharp thorns, and in the end what will remain for you? Nothing but the grave. Honors and dignities to which your pride restlessly aspires do not satiate your hungry soul any more than air can satisfy your empty stomach; death will coma sooner or later, and what then?

The sinful pleasures and joys, scarcely tasted, disappear and leave nothing· in the heart but bitterness and melancholy; death will come sooner or later, and what then? Reflect and see if this is not all true! Do you not see there the thorns of the roses of sin ? Open your eyes and think of the days when you were yet tn a state of innocence and purity of morals, how light was your heart, how joyous and happy, what consolation you experienced at prayer! how peacefully you went to rest in the evening, how joyfully you arose in the morning! And now? Ah, what a change has taken place! The peace of heart is gone; sadness, melancholy and disquietude torment you, and your sinful life often prepares for you the bitterest hours. Oh, return in time to your duty and your God, and do not wait till it is too late.

5. The guardian angel also shows the sinner hell with its eternal torments, and says to him : Consider, O sinner, what awaits you if you persevere in impenitence. Hell awaits you. What is hell ? A fire, says Christ. What causes greater pain that fire ? Imagine what you would suffer if you were to hold your hand over a burning light only for five minutes. You would not do it for any consideration. And you regard not the fire of hell, compared to which all earthly fire is as cooling dew ! You do not fear the fire of hell, which does not burn a few hours, days, months, years, nor for millions of years, but for all eternity. You do not fear the fire of hell in which the damned throughout all eternity have not a moment's rest, but without interruption suffer torments which far transcend all earthly torments. You do not fear the fire of hell in which you will howl and gnash your teeth vith pain and despair, like wild beasts. Oh, you have lost all faith and understanding, if the thought of hell with its eternal pains cannot deter you from sin and induce you by a real conversion to reconcile yourself to God. Thus speaks the guardian angel, in order to infuse into the sinner a salutary fear and to move him to repentance.

6. But in various other ways he tries to influence him, in order if possible to save his soul. Sometimes he terrifies him by horrible dreams, places him before the judgment-seat of God and makes him hear the dread sentence of condemnation ; he shows him hell with all its inexpressible pains, and the place prepared for him unless he repents in time. He also turns to God and begs him to send a misfortune to the careless, stubborn sinner; to visit him with a painful sickness and to inflict other sufferings and tribulations upon him, with a view, as it were, to compel him to renounce his sinful life and to do penance. In the meantime he does not cease to persuade him, to admonish him, and to importune him with petitions and threats to make a good confes

sion at least once, and to be truly converted. But if everything be in vain and he stubbornly persevere in his iniquity and die impenitently, the guardian angel will stand before the judgment-seat of God as his terrible accuser; there he will show what he did for him and how he labored to rescue him from perdition, but how all his efforts proved fruitless; then in holy anger he will turn from him and leave him to the inexorable severity of the divine Judge who will condemn him to eternal fire.

PERORATION.

Thus does the guardian angel speak to those over whom he has charge: he makes use of ever}' means to rescue them from perdition and to bring them to salvation. If his charge be innocent, he seeks to preserve him in his innocence, and takes care that he is not infected by the contagion of the world. If he be a penitent, he endeavors to preserve him from a relapse, and make him walk constantly in the way of penance. Finally, if he be a sinner, he never grows weary of admonishing him to enter into himself and to bring forth fruits worthy of penance. He that profits by the exertions of his holy guardian angel and follows his inspirations and suggestions will surely be saved; but he who turns his back upon his guardian angel, despises his inspirations and impenitentlj' perseveres in his sinful career, will inevitably be lost. Reflect seriously on this, and make to-day, on the feast of the guardian angels, the firm resolution, always to follow the inspirations of your holy guardian angel; then he will go before you, keep you in the path of virtue, and bring you to the place which Jesus Christ has prepared for you.—*Exod.* 23: 20. Amen.

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

Lesson.—*Apoc. 7: 2-12.* **In those days, behold, I, John, saw** another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the sign of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying: Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we sign the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them that were signed, an hundred and forty-four thousand were signed, of every tribe of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were twelve thousand signed: of the tribe of Ruben twelve thousand signed: of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand signed: of the tribe of Aser twelve thousand signed: of the tribe of Nephthali twelve thousand signed: of the tribe of Manasses twelve thousand signed: of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand signed: of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand signed: of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand signed: of the tribe of Zabulon twelve thousand signed: of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand signed: of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand signed. After this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. And they cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and the ancients, and the four living creatures: and they fell before the throne upon their faces, and adored God, saying: Amen. Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and strength to our God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel.—*Matt.* 5:1-12. At that time: Jesus seeing the multitudes, went up into a mountain: and when he was sat down, his disciples came to him, and opening his mouth he taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess **the land. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be com-**

forted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all that is evil against you untruly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.

FIRST SKETCH.

WHAT MUST WE DO IN ORDER TO BE ADMITTED WITH THE SAINTS INTO HEAVEN?

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross andfollow me.—Matt. **16 : 24.**

In the saints, whose festival we celebrate to-day, have been fulfilled the words of Christ: *Be glad and rejoice,fcr your reward is very great tn heaven.* Who can describe the joys which they experience in that heavenly country? God has wiped away all tears from their eyes, they are free from all mourning, crying and sorrow, and all sufferings and tribulations of this mortal life *[Afoc.* 21: 4); they are most intimately united with God and enjoy that happiness of which the Apostle speaks: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."—*I. Cor.* 2: 9. This joy, this felicity, lasts for ever, without interruption, so long as God is God. As unspeakably happy and blessed **as** our glorified brothers and sisters are, we also must become; for it is the will of God that we all be saved. *But what must we do in order to be admitted with the saints into heaven?* **According to** the words of our Lord Jesus Christ we must—

I. Deny ourselves;
II. Take up our cross, and
III. Follow him.

Part 1

Self-denial or mortification consists in curbing our evil inclinations, and desires; our senses, such as the eyes, the ears and the tongue, and in courageously renouncing everything that is **an**

obstacle to salvation. This mortification is necessary for our salvation, for without it we can neither avoid evil nor do good.

i. *Without it we cannot avoid evil.*

(ai) Sacred history convinces us of this. What befell Cain when he disregarded the admonition of God? "The lust of sin shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it."—*Gen.* 4: 7. He committed the crime of fratricide. What happened to David when he gave free scope to his eyes? He became an adulterer and a murderer. What was the end of Judas when he did not resist his inordinate desire for money? He betrayed and sold his Lord and Master for thirty pieces of silver; after which, in despair, he hanged himself.

(3.) *Experience.* There are many who are infected with the vices of pride, avarice, impurity, drunkenness, anger, etc., offending God most grievously. Why is this? Simply because they do not mortify themselves. They give full liberty to their senses, allow evil desires to grow in their hearts like weeds, and never think of restraining them. Again we see persons who, chained by their evil habits, live in sin for years; they repeatedly curse and blaspheme, sin against chastity, get drunk, absent themselves from their homes until late at night, and live in strive and enmity with their neighbor. What is the cause of all this? Because they do no violence to themselves and will not consent to abandon their sinful habits and to curb their wicked lusts.

(ci) The example of the saints. They knew well that without self-denial one cannot avoid evil; for this reason they often underwent the greatest austerities and practiced the most astonishing mortifications. St. Paul says of himself; "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection: lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away."—*I. Cor. 9: 27.* St. Jerome lacerated his breast with stones, St. Benedict rolled himself in briars and thorns, St. Bernard plunged himself in a frozen lake, in order to overcome impure temptations. St. Francis Borgia continually made war against the flesh, and thought only of mortifying himself; whatever was painful to his sensual nature he called his friend. When he made a long journey in the middle of summer and was burnt by the heat of the sun, he said: "How admirably my friend assists me." He used to say the same of cold, of rain, of rheumatism, and of slanderers. He often put little pebbles into his shoes to inflict pain on himself; in winter when it was very cold he walked at a slower pace. **Learn** from the examples of the saints that you also must **prac-**

tice, if not extraordinary, at least ordinary **mortifications in order** to preserve yourselves from sin.

2. Without it me cannot do good,

(a.) Every man is naturally inclined to evil; to do good costs him more or less labor, because his sensual nature is opposed to it. Besides this, there are two other enemies of our salvation, the world and the devil, who endeavor by all possible means to lead us astray. We must pray, because prayer is not only a good work, but also one of the conditions upon which our salvation depends; and this being a gratuitous gift of God he has an unquestionable right to establish the conditions upon which it shall be obtained. But how much it costs to pray attentively and devoutly! Are we not every moment disturbed by worldly thoughts and assailed by various temptations, which we must banish? We should love to give alms. How often does it happen that our children, or other relations, or perhaps avaricious thoughts suggest to us: "You have not an abundance of temporal goods, you can spare nothing, you may need every cent you have, you may yet end your days in the poor-house." We should be reconciled with our neighbor, and forgive him from our heart, but self-love arises, vividly calls to mind the injury and offense we have received and says to us: "How is it possible for you to forgive this person who has treated you so badly. It would be a shame for you to humble yourself before him and speak to him." Thus every exercise of virtue, every good work, is connected with various difficulties, for the three enemies of our salvation labor indefatigably to hinder us from doing good and to draw us into sin and eternal damnation. "As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor."—*Ecclus.* 24: 23. The vine needs to be pruned frequently, if it is to bear not only leaves, but grapes. In like manner we must curb our sensual emotions and inclinations, that they may not prevent us from bringing forth fruits of justice.

(£.) The examples of the saints also convince us of this. We read of them that they distinguished themselves in virtue, and reached a high degree of perfection. They were exceedingly humble, meek, patient and merciful; they lived so chastely that they carried their robe of innocence with them unstained to the grave; they were so devout that they spent whole nights in prayer; so liberal that they distributed all their substance among the poor. How did they attain to such an extraordinary degree of virtue and holiness? Chiefly by self-denial, which they practiced continually. St. Aloysius was an angel in human form; we know that he always bridled his eyes and did not even look at his own mother. St. Francis of Sales was sc meek that **not even the**

greatest offense could excite him to anger; but he himself confesses that he obtained this meekness only by manifold mortifications. St. John the Almoner was so indefatigable in bestowing benefits that before his death he had given away even the bed on which he died, but he arrived at this degree of benevolence only by combating every inordinate inclination to earthly goods, and he gained the victory by works of mercy and charity to the poor. Follow the example of the saints and deny yourselves, that with the grace of God you may be enabled to avoid evil and to do good.

Part II.

i. *To take up the cross is for most people absolutely necessary for salvation.*

(a.') *It is necessary for many sinners.* God gives sinners numerous graces for their conversion. He speaks to them through the voice of conscience, by the exhortations of priests in the pulpit and in the confessional, he sends them special seasons of grace, such as missions, and jubilees, and seeks to make a salutary impression upon them by various events, such as the death of an acquaintance, but all in vain; they remain unconverted. Then in his longanimity and mercy God acts like a good father, who if his children do not profit by his admonitions and reprimands, has recourse to the rod and severely punishes them; he sends the sinner into the school of sufferings, inflicting upon him poverty and need, sickness and pain, contempt and other afflictions. This opens the sinner's eyes and softens his hard heart; he perceives the error of his way, repents of his sins, and is converted to God. Examples: *Manasses.* This king had been guilty of much wickedness, and even induced his people to commit idolatry. By the command of God he was often admonished to repentance, but in vain. Terrible punishments were visited upon him; he lost both crown and sceptre, and was carried to Babylon in chains. This caused him to repent of his crimes, and promise amendment. He kept his word,.and when he again came into possession of his kingdom he restored the worship of the true God throughout the land and lived the life of a pious prince to the end of his days.—*II. Paralip.* 33. The prodigal son, who was brought back to his senses and compelled to return repentant to his father only on account of the great miseries into which he had plunged himself by his debaucheries.—*Luke* 15 : 11, *et seq.* Even so in our days, crosses and afflictions are often the only rpeans for the conversion of the sinner.

(3.) *Even for many just.* **There is scarcely any one so healthy that he does not deed medicine sometimes, in order to remove**

some disorder and to continue in good health. In like mannei there are but few who retain their zeal for virtue, if they are always prosperous. Continued prosperity is frequently the cause of their becoming tepid, of placing their affections on earthly things, and even of their fall. Examples: *David,* who did not commit the two crimes of adultery and murder at the time when he was persecuted by an envious father-in-law, or when he was forced to live in the dens and caverns of the wilderness in order to conceal himself, or when he was despised and mocked by his own wife, pursued and dishonored by his own son, insulted by his own servants, and sorely oppressed on all sides, but only when he spent his days in idleness in the palace. *Solomon,* whose heart was so corrupted by pleasures of every kind during a long peace that he became guilty of idolatry. *The first Christians,* who led holy lives during the time of persecution, but when peace was obtained, degenerated in many ways and even apostatized from the true faith. Let us reflect upon ourselves. How soon we become lukewarm, how easily we forget God, if we live for a time without trouble and care! How perceptibly our desire for heaven decreases as earthly joys increase! How easily it might happen that we should turn away from God and sin grievously, if our days of prosperity lasted long. If, therefore, God sometimes visits us with afflictions, let us not consider it an evil, for they are perhaps necessary for the salvation of our soul.

2. *It is expedient far all.*

(λ.) *In order to satisfy for temporal punishment due to sin.* Many of those who now walk in the path of virtue, formerly committed great and grievous sins; true, they have sincerely confessed these sins and obtained the remission of them, together with the eternal punishment, but the temporal punishment remains, for which they must render satisfaction either here or in purgatory. They still commit venial sins, which likewise incur temporal punishments. We have various means for cancelling these temporal punishments, such as indulgences, interior and exterior mortifications, works of mercy, and the frequent reception of the sacraments. But how lukewarm and careless most of us are in the employment of these means. Though we may be numbered among the just, is it not most profitable for us if God, by sending us tribulations, affords us an opportunity to suffer our purgatorial pains in this world? Should we not thankfully accept these sufferings and pray with St. Augustine: "Lord, here cut, here burn, but spare me in eternity?"

(6.) For the increase of our future happiness. The Apostle assures us of this: "For that which at present is momentary and

light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."—ZZ. *Cor.* 4:17. And Christ himself says in the gospel of to-day : *Blessed are ye when lhey shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly, for my sake ; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.* We need not wonder therefore that the saints during the time of their earthly pilgrimage carried their cross not only with patience, but even with joy, and longed for it with a greater desire than the children of the world long for honors and sensual enjoyments. Thus St. Teresa said: "Lord, let me suffer or die." St. Magdalen of Pazzi: "Lord, not to die, but to suffer." Bear, then, the cross which God places upon your shoulders with patience, for it is the key that opens heaven for you.

Part IIL

Self-denial and mortification are necessary for salvation, but not sufficient; we must also *follow Christ.* Now, we follow him—

1. When we *believe m him,* that is, believe without doubting, all that God has revealed and all that the Catholic Church proposes to our faith. The necessity of faith is expressed over and over again in the Sacred Scripture. "He that believeth in the Son, hath life everlasting, but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth in him."—*John* 3 : 36. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned."—*Mark* 16: 16. The Apostle writes: "Without faith it is impossible to please God."—*Heb.* it : 6. The saints were convinced of the necessity of faith; for this reason the Apostles and their successors preached it with the greatest zeal both to Jews and Gentiles; for this reason millions of them sacrificed their life for the faith and under the most cruel tortures. Do not permit yourselves to be led astray by those who say that it matters not whether one believes, or does not believe, whether one has this or that faith, provided one be honest. He who speaks thus contradicts divine revelation, and is not on the road to salvation but to damnation. Adhere firmly to the Catholic faith and follow the example of the saints, who in this faith found the sweetest consolation in life and in death, and would not renounce it for all the treasures of the world.

2. When we *love him with our whole heart.* Charity also is **absolutely** necessary for salvation, for without charity faith has no sanctifying virtue. We are taught this by the parable of the **man** who appeared at the marriage feast without a wedding **gar-**

ment—*Matt. 22.* Without charity even the gift of working miracles, and the most beautiful virtues, are as naught: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."—*Z. Cor.* 13: 1-3. The saints became holy and worked out their salvation, not by the miracles they wrought, not by means of the individual good works which they practiced, but only through the love of (rod, from which their virtues and good works proceeded. As the planets receive their light from the sun and would remain obscure if the sun would not show his light, so all virtues receive their value from charity, without which they are of no merit before God.

PERORATION.

You know now what you must do in order to be admitted among the saints in heaven. *Deny yourself,* mortify the lusts of the flesh and all sinful desires, bridle your senses and with constancy refuse to yourself all that is sinful and all that leads to sin. *Take up your cross,* accept cheerfully all the sufferings and tribulations you receive from the hand of God, for they are graces which will lead you on in the path of salvation, confirm you in good, expiate the temporal punishments due to your sins and increase your glory in heaven. *Follow Christ.* Hold fast to the faith and have charity, and manifest both by an unceasing fervor in the practice of Christian virtues and good works. Even though self-denial, mortification, the carrying of your cross and following Christ be beset with difficulties, let not your courage fail; God is with you, and assisted by his grace you can do all things. Labor, combat and suffer with the saints on earth, that you may triumph with them in heaven. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

LIKE THE SAINTS WE CAN SERVE GOD AND REACH HEAVEN.

I saiv a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and ***in*** *sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands.—Apoc* 7: 9.

Our holy mother the Church opens heaven to us to-day, and presents to our view Jesus Christ, the Son of God, sitting at the right hand of God, his eternal Father; near him Mary, the Queen of Heaven, then the nine choirs of angels, and finally, the countless multitude of the saints, who clothed in the white robes of innocence and purity, bearing palms in their hands, the emblem of victory over the enemies of salvation, stand before the throne of God, where they cry with a loud voice: *Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.* What an enrapturing sight! But shall we only behold and admire the glory and felicity of the saints in heaven? Shall we not be animated with the desire to participate in their glory? Oh, surely, there is no one here present who does not heartily desire to be admitted one day into the company of the saints in heaven. Is it possible for us to attain this happiness? Yes, if we earnestly desire it, for the saints, as I shall show you to-day, had—

I. The same obstacles to salvation that we have, and
II. No other means of salvation than those imparted to us.

Part I.

The saints had the same obstacles to salvation that we have.

1. What are the obstacles we have in the way to salvation? They are—

(a.) *The devil and his temptations.* St. Peter designates the arch-enemy of the human race as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.—*I. Pet.* 5: 8. He lays snares for us everywhere, in order to draw us into sin and eternal damnation. He envies us every virtue and finds pleasure in drawing us from good, and enticing us to evil. Therefore he lies in wait for the inordinate inclinations of our heart, and as formerly he tempted our first mother, Eve, so he incessantly invites us to pluck the forbidden

fruit, to enjoy this sinful pleasure, to commit that injustice, to do this or that unlawful action.

(δ.) *The world,* that is, those light, frivolous persons, who live according to the spirit of the world, and endeavor to lead the good and virtuous into sin and vice. These people cast out their golden nets, as it were, to entangle us therein; they represent the way to heaven as easy and convenient; make religion an affair of no importance, preach the licentiousness of the flesh, call virtue extravagance or hypocrisy, deny the immortality of the soul, the existence of a future reward and punishment, and even the existence of God. He who does not heed the maxims and suggestions of the world is despised and ridiculed as an ignoramus, a hypocrite, or a man who is far from being up to the spirit of the age.

(r.) *The flesh,* that is, that indwelling concupiscence, which is a consequence of original sin and which manifests its existence within us so long as we live. It is to this concupiscence that the words of the Lord refer: "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" *{Gen.* 8: 21); as also the words of St. James: "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured."—*St. James* 1: 14. This evil concupiscence always desires that which gratifies sensuality and flatters the passions; it detests everything that causes us pain or requires exertion on our part, and will not hear of self-denial and mortification. It is therefore opposed to everything good; and we are obliged to struggle against it and do violence to ourselves if we wish to practice any virtue whatsoever. It is the fruitful source of temptations, and entices us at one time to pride, at another, to avarice, to impurity, to envy, in fact, to all kinds of sins.

(cf.) *One's state of life.* Every state of life has its burdens and difficulties. No matter what your condition of life may be, it always requires labor and exertion to serve God and to work out your salvation. Look, for instance, at married people, fathers and mothers. How many and heavy are the burdens weighing on their shoulders. They must educate their children and maintain good discipline among them. How easy it is for them to overlook or permit something that is sinful and displeasing to God! How much it is to be feared that in their solicitude for temporal things they violate the duties of Christian charity, or even of justice, and forget the eternal. Look at single people. How many allurements, especially while they are still young, they have to impurity, to drunkenness, to gambling and every kind of sinful amusement! Everything urges and entices them to

give full scope to their passions and to enjoy life; and they must labor hard, if they wish to resist this evil propensity and to live piously. Look at the rich and those who are in high positions. How much they must be on their guard, in order not to sin against that virtue which is so necessary, viz., humility, not to look down upon their fellow-men with contempt, not to misuse their riches for the gratification of sinful passions. Look at the poor and the lowly. In what danger they are of envying the rich and those in the higher walks of life, and of entertaining feelings of aversion towards them, of being discontented with their situation, and of murmuring against the dispositions of divine Providence, or of having recourse to dishonest actions, cheating and thieving with a view to ameliorate their condition.

These are the usual obstacles to salvation. And it is just these obstacles that many allege in order to justify their worldly and sinful life and to make people believe that is impossible for them to work out their salvation. But are they right? Are these obstacles really of such a nature that it is impossible to overcome them? I answer: By no means.

2. The saints had the same obstacles to contend with, and notwithstanding became holy and secured their salvation.

(a.) *Did they not struggle hard against the powers of helli* Peruse the lives of the saints and you will not find one among them who was not tempted and allured by the devil in various ways. I shall give only one instance. St. Justina, having become a Christian, had made a vow of virginity. Agloides, a pagan youth, passionately loved her and sought her hand, but she rejected his proposal. As the young pagan could not be succeed by means of flatteries, promises or threats, he applied to a sorcerer, called Cyprian, who promised him success through his infernal art. He conjured the powers of darkness to excite sentiments of love in the holy virgin, and she really suffered the most violent temptations by day and by night; but she fought bravely; she fasted, wept before God, invoked Jesus and Mary, blessed herself with the sign of the cross, and came forth victorious from the temptations. Cyprian, who saw himself deceived and defeated, forced from the evil spirits the following confession: "Justina is a Christian, all hell cannot prevail against Christ; and he who has recourse to him, comes forth victorious from every temptation." The saints suffered temptations just as violent as Justina's, and by the aid of God's grace overcame them.

(bi) The saints also lived in a world steeped in wickedness; indeed many of them had to overcome even greater obstacles than we. Only think of the first ages of Christianity, and what

the Christians of those days had to suffer in order to remain true to the faith! What sacrifices they were obliged to make so that they might fulfil their religious duties! The profession of the Christian religion was considered a capital crime, and those who professed it had to be prepared at any moment on account of their faith to be robbed of all their substance, to be cast into prison, to be tortured most cruelly and to sacrifice their lives. And yet history informs us that millions of Christians remained loyal to God and to their faith; therefore they now triumph as martyrs in heaven.

(c.) The saints by nature were as much **inclined to evil as we** they had to do violence to themselves just as well as we, with a view to subdue the lusts of the flesh and to preserve themselves from every interior and exterior contamination. When St. Hilarion suffered from temptations against purity, he imposed upon himself the hardest labors, or struck his breast and said to his body: "I shall take care that you do not rebel; I shall feed you with straw instead of grain, I shall load you down and tire you out in such a manner that you will be content if you have sufficient to eat, and you will never again think of impure things." St. Francis of Sales was by nature very irritable and hot-tempered, but by continual mortification, watchfulness, and fervent prayer, he obtained such a mastery over himself that not even the greatest insult or offense could rouse his anger or extort a harsh word from him. He used to say, if anyone would pluck out one of his eyes, he would look at him in just as friendly a manner as if he had not offered him the least injury. So manfully did the saints overcome the flesh and all its inordinate and sinful inclinations.

(ά) Finally, the saints fulfilled the duties of their state of life with the greatest conscientiousness, though frequently the difficulties connected therewith were very considerable. You find among them devout parents who brought up their children in the fear of God,kept a strict watch over them and would not countenance any evil; artisans, laborers and businessmen who never appropriated the least thing unjustly to themselves, but always sought first the kingdom of God and his justice; children and servants, who edified all by their good conduct, obedience and truly religious disposition; the wealthy who did not misuse their possessions for the gratification of their evil passions and a sensual life, but for the glory of God, the salvation of their own soul, the support of the afflicted and needy and for other good purposes; the poor and sorely oppressed who followed their divine Redeemer on the way of the cross with patience and constancy, and in their need and abandonment consoled themselves with the hope of receiving the goods of heaven. Such were the lives

of the saints; they overcame all obstacles in the way *of* Ovation. Now, if they with their obstacles could serve God and be saved, why should it be impossible for us to work out our salvation? Must we not, if we wish to be candid and to give testimony to the truth, say with St. Augustine: "If these could do it, why not I?"

Part IL

The saints had no other means of salvation than those imparted to us. What means had the saints that we have not? They had—

i. *The word of God.*

(a.) The word of God is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths.—*Ps.* 118: 105. "The word of God is living and effectual and more piercing than a two-edged sword, and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also, and the marrow."—*Heb.* 4:12. It is a good seed, which, if it falls upon good ground, springs up, and yields fruit an hundred fold.—*Luke* 8. It was by the word of God that Peter, on the feast of Pentecost, converted three thousand Jews to the Christian faith; it was the word of God that softened the hearts of the most obstinate sinners, led whole tribes and nations into the way of salvation and renewed the face of the earth. The saints also availed themselves of the word of God. How many of them, entangled in the fetters of sin, have been converted by hearing a sermon, or reading a spiritual book! Examples: St. Augustine was converted by listening to the sermons of St. Ambrose; St. Ignatius by reading the life of Christ and the lives of the saints. The saints made the word of God the subject of their daily meditation, and called it to mind in all their occupations in order to regulate their life according to it. Following the example of Christ, they opposed the word of God to every temptation, and thus frustrated all the attacks of Satan.

(3.) Have we not, also, the same word of God, which operated so effectually in the saints? Is it not preached in our days on all Sundays and holidays? Have we not a number of books which contain everything that pertains to Christian faith and morals? Whence comes it, that with so many Catholics the word of God produces no fruit? From the fact that they never hear a sermon or catechetical instruction, and never read a spiritual book. They disdain the word of God as the Israelites did the manna in the desert. How can it, therefore, produce any fruit in them? What

can be expected of a field that is not cultivated? Many, on the other hand, hear the word of God, but without fervor, without the resolution to make it the rule of their life. With these the seed of the word of God falls by the way side and is trodden down. Many, whilst hearing a sermon are deeply impressed and make good resolutions, but as soon as they leave the church and return to their everyday life the good impressions are obliterated, the good resolutions never put into effect. Is it any wonder that the word of God remains ineffectual, since by far the majority of Catholics either do not hear it at all, or if they do, with but little solicitude for salvation?

2. *The Sacraments of Penance and of the Blessed Eucharist.*

(al) The saints availed themselves also of these means of salvation with great fervor, and thus preserved themselves from contamination, or if they had the misfortune to fall into sin, they arose from their fall by a true and speedy repentance. Even the saints were not all innocent souls; even among them we find some who were once sinners. I will mention only a David, a St. Mary Magdalen, a St. Peter, a St. Augustine, a St. Margaret of Cortona, and a St. Mary of Egypt. But they did not always remain sinners, they did austere penance for their sins, reconciled themselves to God and thenceforth led a holy life. Many of them renounced the joys and pleasures of the world, led a retired life, sought their joy in God, often received the holy sacraments, and performed the most severe penances to the end of their life.

(3.) Now, I ask again: Can we not in this also imitate the saints? Do we not have the opportunity of receiving the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist on all Sundays and holidays, and even, if our devotion prompt us, on weekdays? Can we not by a sincere and penitent confession receive the remission of even the most grievous sins, and by a worthy communion obtain an increase of sanctifying grace, with strength and power to overcome all temptations and to persevere in the service of God? Whose fault is it, if these means of grace so frequently remain ineffectual? It is our own fault. How slothful and indifferent many are in the reception of the sacraments! They are satisfied to pass a whole year without confession and communion. Even at Easter they would neither confess nor receive communion, were it not a strict law of the Church. And how great is the number of those who receive the holy sacraments unworthily? Many go to confession without true contrition, and without a firm purpose of amendment. How many after an invalid confession renew the crime of Judas and burden their soul with a horrible sacrilege by the unworthy reception of the Sacrament of the

Altar. Alasl how could the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist produce grace and blessing in the souls of such lukewarm, slothful Catholics?

3. *Prayer.*

(«.) This is one of the most effectual means of salvation. Fervent prayer obtains for the sinner the grace of conversion, and for the just man the grace of final perseverance. The saints were aware of this, therefore they practiced prayer with the most commendable zeal. Not a day passed on which they did not pray in the morning and in the evening with the most fervent devotion. It was their greatest pleasure on Sundays and holidays to assist at mass, and at the services in the afternoon; and they loved to remain in prayer before Christ in the tabernacle. All their leisure time they devoted to exercises of devotion, and during their occupations and labors they frequently looked up to God and recommended themselves by pious ejaculations to his love and grace. Many even deprived themselves of sleep to gain time for prayer. Examples: St. Anthony the hermit loved prayer so much that his mind, even during his work, remained with God. He rose at midnight and prayed on his knees, with hands raised to heaven, till the rising of the sun, and often till three o'clock in the afternoon. St. Frances of Rome, as mistress of a household, had the care of many temporal affairs, yet she found time for prayer. Early in the morning she went to church and assisted at the holy sacrifice with great devotion. She slept only two hours, and therefore, notwithstanding all her household affairs, she found plenty of time for prayer. St. Louis, who as king of France was overwhelmed with cares and duties, found much time for prayer. He assisted daily at matins and lauds early in the morning, heard two masses, and besides this recited the office of the Blessed Virgin with his chaplains. He did not omit this devotion in his captivity among the Saracens. Such was the zeal of the saints in prayer. No wonder that they received great, and often extraordinary graces to overcome all temptations and to arrive at perfection.

(Æ.) This equally necessary and effectual means for our salvation is also within our reach, for who is there among us who cannot elevate his heart to God in prayer? But in this respect also how many Catholics we find who do not make the proper use of prayer! How careless they are in the performance of their private devotion! How many days pass on which they do not say their morning and evening prayers! How many neglect to hear mass even on Sundays and holidays! How great is the number of those whose thoughts are directed only to earthly things and who scarce

ly ever think of God! And when they pray, how is it done? Alas! how cold, how distracted they are; how completely without devotion and fervor! How can persons who frequently neglect prayer or pray in a lukewarm manner and with distractions, lead a pious life and be saved? Prayer is the necessary nourishment of the soul; as man cannot live and work without food, so without prayer he cannot work out his salvation.

PERORATION.

You perceive that it is our fault if we are not saved. **Our condition** is not worse than that of the saints, for our obstacles are neither too great nor the means of salvation too few. The saints had to overcome the same obstacles to salvation that we have, and the same means of salvation that they had are ours. If they were saved, why cannot we be? Let us then renew our zeal and be solicitous for the one thing necessary, the salvation of our soul Let us diligently employ the means of salvation, hear the word of God, often and with well prepared hearts receive the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, and practice devout prayer. By a zealous and persevering use of these means we shall, with the grace of God, like the saints of heaven, finish our course and obtain the crown of eternal glory. Amen.

THIRD SKETCH.

WHY HAS THE CHURCH INSTITUTED THE FESTIVAL OF ALL SAINTS?

Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle; let his praise be in the church of the saints.—Ps. 149: 1.

The solemn festival of All Saints, which the Church celebrates to-day, has the following origin: Formerly there was at Rome a temple called the Pantheon, which was dedicated to the service and veneration of all the pagan deities. After the downfall of paganism the Christians took possession of this temple, and Pope Boniface IV., in the year 607, dedicated it to the Blessed Virgin and all the saints, and deposited there a number of relics of the martyrs. From that time the festival of All Saints was annually

celebrated at Rome; thence the devotion extended to France, and gradually to the universal Church. Pope Sixtus IV. honored it with an Octave, in the year 1480. The Church celebrates this festival annually on the first day of November, and consequently, towards the end of the Ecclesiastical Year, to indicate that the aim and object of the Ecclesiastical Year is to lead us to sanctity, and that if during it we zealously employ the graces offered to us for our sanctification we shall hereafter reign in heaven with Christ and his saints. Let us to-day consider *why the Church has instituted the festival of All Saints.*

She has instituted it in order—

I. That we may have an opportunity to honor all the saints;
II. That we may be the more sure of being heard through their intercession, and
III. That we may the more zealously imitate them.

Part I.

The festival of this day affords us an opportunity of duly honoring all the saints.

i. In the epistle of this day mention is made of the multitude of the elect. St. John had a vision in which he beheld all the saints. First, he saw of each of the twelve tribes of Israel twelve thousand signed, that is, elect; therefore, one hundred and forty-four thousand in all. This definite number is, of course, not to be taken literally, but signifies in general a very great multitude. Thereby is indicated that of all the twelve tribes of Israel a great number will be converted and saved until the end of time. Then St. John saw a far greater multitude of saints of all nations, for he writes: *After this I saw a great multitude, which no one could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongices.* By these saints we are to understand the converted pagans; that is, all those pagans who from the beginning of Christianity to the end of the world will embrace the Catholic faith and be admitted into heaven. The multitude of these saints is so great that no one can number them.

If, then, according to the words of Christ: ‹rMany are called, but few are chosen," far more souls are lost than saved, it nevertheless remains true that the number of the elect in heaven is even now very great, and will continue to increase until the end of the world, so that it will be impossible to number them. To speak only of those saints who died martyrs in the first three

centuries, their number, according to the testimony of reliable historians, amounts to several millions. Who can number the other saints of the clergy and laity, who, having served God with fidelity, now reign with him in heaven? Their number without doubt is greater than that of the holy martyrs. The Catholic Church has existed for early nineteen hundred years, and numbers over two hundred million children. Now, if we suppose that the Church numbers two hundred millions for one thousand years, and do not count the first eight hundred years—a long time—and that of these two hundred millions the third part only has been saved—a number which is certainly not too great, since a number of children die in baptismal innocence, we have already a sum of seventy billions. In heaven, therefore, there are for certain from sixty-eight to sixty-nine billions more saints than there are people upon earth. How great therefore is the number of the elect!

2. To all these saints veneration is due. Who should not reverence them, since during their life they did so much good, fought and suffered so much, and conferred so many benefits upon the human race; since now they are friends of God, and his guests, possessing a higher dignity than all the exalted personages of the world, since God himself honors them and has glorified many of them by miracles? To venerate each saint individually, however, is impossible. And why? First, because most of the saints are entirely unknown to us. It is with the saints as with the heavenly bodies. The stars whose names are known to us are comparatively few; of a countless multitude we know nothing, we have no names for them, do not even see them. It is true the Church honors a particular saint every day during the year, but how small is the number of these known saints in comparison with those of whom we have no knowledge. We cannot venerate the saints individually and singly because they are unknown to us; moreover, the number is so great that we cannot venerate each of them singly. If We wished to say only one *Our Father* in honor of each saint, we should have to live for over a thousand years. The Church, therefore, instituted this festival that no saint might be left without veneration. She remembers them all in her liturgy on this day, venerates them and animates us by her example to do the same.

The festival of this day is also instituted in order that through the intercession of all the saints we may be more sure of being heard.

1. If, according to the words of St. James, the continual prayer of the just man upon earth avails much, what must we say of the prayer of the saints in heaven who are free from all imperfections, whilst even the most zealous servants of God in this mortal life are not free from all defects? The Sacred Scripture informs us that God through the intercession of Moses showed mercy again and again to the people of Israel after they had grievously offended him. We may the^fore so much the more hope for his protection and and assistance when one of his elect in heaven intercedes for us.

Church history and the lives of the saints furnish us with proofs of this consoling truth. St. Augustine, the great doctor of the Church and bishop, relates the following miracle as an eye witness: There was a man at Hippo named Bassus, a native of Syria. While praying before the relics of St. Stephen for his daughter who was dangerously sick, some of his people came to inform him that she was dead. His friends, however, who met them on the way prevented them from informing him of the sad tidings, fearing that he would be overcome by his feelings in presence of all the people. But on reaching home, where his servants were lamenting with a loud voice, he threw the dress of his daughter, which had touched the relics, over her body and she immediately came back to life. After relating this miracle, St. Augustine remarks that volumes could be written if all the miraculous cures which were effected at Hippo and Calamus by the invocation of St. Stephen were narrated.

2. Judge for yourselves whether the intercession of all the saints together will not be far more effectual? Our Blessed Lord says: "If two of you shall agree upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven."—*Matt.* 18: 19. How powerful must that prayer be which all the saints direct to God, their Lord and Father? Will not the words of the Lord be verified: "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will hear; as they are yet speaking, I will hear."—*Is.* 65: 24. St. Basil, in an oration on the forty martyrs, says: "These are they who, having taken possession of our country, stand like towers against the attacks of the enemy. Here we can always find help. You have exerted yourselves, often fatigued yourselves, to find an advocate, a mediator. Now you have forty, who all unite in one common prayer. He who is overwhelmed with cares, let him have recourse to them, just as well as he who is prosperous; the one, that he may find deliverance, and the other, security in his prosperity." As you perceive, this doctor of the Church animates and encourages us to confidence in the forty martyrs, hecause there are so many of them who unite their prayer with ours. How great then should be our con-

fidence when to-day we have not only forty, not hundreds and thousands, but many millions, who all pray for us. How could it be possible that God would disregard › prayers, petitions and supplications of so many of his saints? Let us then rejoice that the Church has instituted this festival, for we may confidently hope that God will give us everything useful and necessary, since not only one, but all the saints together pray for us.

The festival of this day is an invitation to us zealously to imitate the saints.

i. St Bernard says: "The Church has also instituted the feast of All Saints for this reason, viz., to animate us by the representation of so many saints, that as we devoutly reverence them we may also imitate their virtues, and, as we call them blessed, we may also aspire to the beatitude which they possess." When St. Augustine before his conversion contemplated the example of the saints who had subdued their passions and dedicated themselves to the service of God, he manfully and earnestly resolved to repent saying: "If these could do it, why not I." We must say the same, since God imparts to us, as to the saints, graces in abundance, by means of which we can work out our salvation. The king on his throne must say: "I can become what a David, a Louis, a Henry, became. In place of this perishable crown I can obtain the crown of eternal glory." The soldier, the lawyer, the judge, should say: "I can become what Josue and Sebastian, what Daniel and Ira were, if I only avail myself of the graces imparted to me." The priest must say: "I can be what so many holy Popes, bishops and priests have been; all that is necessary is to serve God with the same fervor and fidelity with which they served him." Parents and children must say: "We can become what so many married and single persons under the Old and the New Law were; all that is necessary is to regulate our lives according to their example." All should say, whatever their condition or state of life may be: "We can become what so many in our position have become—saints in heaven—if, like them, we walk in the fear of the Lord."

2. Such should be your language when you consider the saints in heaven Or does your daily occupation perhaps prevent you from serving God? But you have no more to do than so many saints, lay and clerical, who were obliged to spend their whole life in labor. Now, if they could be saved, why should it be i If **possible for you to be saved, you whose life is far less burden***

some; Or have you so many and such violent temptations that you cannot persevere in virtue? But your temptations are not more violent than those of Joseph of Egypt, of the chaste Susanna, and of so many martyrs. Now, if they could overcome such violent temptations, why should it be impossible for you to overcome those which are not so great? Or have you, perhaps, fewer graces or means of salvation? By no means; for since God wills all men to be saved, he gives to all the necessary graces for salvation; moreover, like the saints, you have the word of God, the holy sacrifice of the mass, the holy sacraments, the holy seasons and numerous opportunities for your sanctification. You must confess then that you receive as many graces and means of grace as most of the saints, and that it is equally as easy for you to serve God and be saved.

PERORATION.

The festival of All Saints should animate you, not only to reverence the saints, and to invoke their intercession, but also to follow their example. Each one now triumphant in heaven cries out to us in the words of the Apostle: "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ." The saints served God with the greatest fervor; his will was to them of paramount importance; therefore they fulfilled the duties of their religion and state of life with the greatest conscientiousness, and performed all the good they could. You must also be zealous in the service of God, and always fulfil the duties which religion and your state of life impose upon you. The saints served God so long as they lived; nothing could make them waver in their fidelity. You must also lead a virtuous life, and strengthen yourselves with the thought that you will be rewarded by him a thousand-fold for all that you take upon yourselves and endure for his sake. Persevere with constancy to the end, labor, combat and suffer with the saints that with them you also may be glorified. Amen.

FOURTH SKETCH.

WE CAN AND MUST BE HOLY.

Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.—*Matt.* 5: 12.

We are assembled here to-day to call to mind the felicity of all the saints who now reign triumphantly with Christ in heaven

and to invoke their intercession on our behalf. Every day during the year the Church presents for our imitation one or more of her glorious heroes who have won the admiration of the world, the applause of angels, and merited an immortal crown of glory; but on the first day of November she raises, as it were, the curtain which hides the Church triumphant from the Church militant and reveals to us those bright figures who have heroically borne their holy part in the ever changing scenes and vicissitudes of life. We behold on this day radiant forms and faces bright with the halo of celestial glory. We behold figures which we have never before seen. The Church, as a watchful guardian of immortal deeds, rescues from oblivion all her unknown warriors, presents to our admiration all her nameless heroes, and crowns with never-dying wreaths her unnumbered saints. The intention of the Church in instituting this festival is, that by considering such heavenly models our faith may be enlivened, our hope strengthened, and our charity inflamed, and that we may bear in mind what the saints were, what they are now, and what, with the grace of God, we can and shall become.

It would, indeed, be deplorable blindness if we only call the saints blessed, praise their beauty and grace, but do not imitate their example. This would be unprofitable, for to admire their beatitude and neglect our own salvation is folly. We know that by their virtues and good works they have won that inheritance which is prepared for all from the foundation of the world, and have we not the courage to work for the same inheritance by imitating their example? Alas! it is really so! The number of those who admire heaven and its blessed inhabitants is great, but the number of those who are willing to fight the great battle which they have fought is undoubtedly very small. "Many are called, but few are chosen." If you wish your reward to be great in heaven, be holy here below.

Z *You must be holy.*
IL You can be holy.

As you cannot obtain the holiness of God himself, aspire at least to the perfection with which the saints performed all their actions, and to that holiness by which they secured the possession of heaven.

Part I.

We must be holy.

To be a sain* or to be holy, means nothing else than to be in a state of grace, to be in the love and friendship of God. This

holiness has been infused into our souls at baptism. Everyone, by reason of the sanctifying· grace received at baptism, can justly say: I am holy. And to say this is not pride, but rather an expression of gratitude. If you consider yourselves to be just and holy only through your own efforts, whereas you are sinners, you are proud. But if, as members of Jesus Christ, you do not know and acknowledge that by his grace you are holy, you are guilty of the basest ingratitude. It is our duty to keep ourselves in this state of grace to which we have been elevated through no merit of ours, and if we be so unfortunate as to forfeit it, it is our bounden duty to recover it as soon as possible and to be careful not to lose it again. This is the holiness to which we all must aspire, for the Apostle says: "This is the will of God, your sanctification.—*I. Thess.* 4: 3. For this end he lavishes his graces and benefits upon us, for God wills nothing but our sanctification; this is the object of all his wishes, and all the goods of this world he gives us as means to obtain that blessed end. Therefore, if you possess the goods of this world, it is your duty to become holy through them; if you are learned, your knowledge should make you know your duty and fulfil it the better. If you are respected in the world, it is only that you may use the world as if you used it not. All that God has done for us, and that we must do for ourselves, should be directed and referred to this end—our sanctification. This is the one thing necessary.

The blindness of the generality of Christians is really very great and very deplorable; for on speaking to them of their duties, of the spirit of penance, of mortification and self-denial, of hatred of sin and contempt of the world, they say: Oh, if we were to practice what you tell us, we should be saints. Is it not the duty of every Christian to lead the life of a saint? is it, perhaps, a work of supererogation, or is the spirit received at baptism and confirmation not a spirit of holiness? Yes, to aspire to perfection, to be holy, is our duty. If we make use of the means which God gives us we shall obtain that blessed end, if we do not, we shall go the way of all flesh; for he that soweth in the flesh, of the flesh he shall also reap corruption. God gives us all graces that are necessary to make us holy. It would not be consistent with his goodness if he had called us to a state which it would be impossible for us to reach. Of what benefit would it be if he were to say to us, as he did to the man sick of the palsy» "Arise and walk," if he were to forsake us in our natural weakness and frailty? You need not doubt, however, that God will give you abundant graces and will support your weakness. Many have more reason to complain of their sloth than of a lack of grace. And to such I would say: Has not Christ redeemed you, has he not

taken your sins upon himself and atoned for them by his death on the cross? What use have you made of all the graces that God has given you? Have you abused them to your own **de-**struction?

Part II.

We can be holy.

We must be holy, because God commands us: "Be ye holy, because I am holy." *We can be holy,* because God supports our weakness by his strength. "I can do all things in him who strengthened me." I do not say that it requires no effort to become holy, for I cannot make that road broad which Christ calls strait, neither do I say that it is impossible to become holy. It is difficult, but not impossible. If we have the least inclination to virtue, nothing moves us more than example; we may explain the laws and precepts in different ways to suit the demands of self-love, but we cannot explain away a living example, because it is life and truth. For this reason, as well as for our encouragement, God has raised up men eminent for sanctity in every age that the world may know what man can do assisted by the grace of God. But because the virtues of the living are as yet imperfect, the Church places before our eyes the virtues of the elect whose sanctity is indisputable, because God has already crowned it with glory. They have been cleansed either by the fire of love or of penance, and thus purified, sanctified and undefiled, they have entered into the joy of the Lord. And as those models are more pleasing to us that on earth have borne a striking resemblance to ourselves, the Church raises the curtain that hides Paradise from our view and shows to all, in whatsoever position of life they may be, some of the Blessed who, having had the same trials and difficulties as they had, yet conquered them, and thus by their example teach and encourage us to do the same.

St. John in the Apocalypse represents heaven to us as filled with a countless multitude of saints of every age, sex and condition. They are all there. The Innocents slain by Herod; Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian world; Peter, the head of Christ's Church upon earth; virgins, widows, doctor», confessors of the Faith, peasants and kings, shepherds and warriors, babes of Christ, and patriarchs of the Old Law. Who can name them all? Above them all, yet seeming to enfold them beneath her mantle, stands the Virgin Mother, the Queen of Heaven, the Mistress of all the saints. With God there is no regard of persons: heaven is the fatherland and home of all the faithful; in heaven

you will find not only the poor of this world, but also the rich; not only martyrs but also such as have conquered by silent patience; not only the oppressed and despised, but also kings and queens who have laid sceptre and crown at the feet of the Lamb. There is no state, no nation, no tribe that is not there represented, to show that all have a right, title and claim to heaven. God's wisdom and providence have sanctified all states of life; everyone can attain the end to which all are called; for, as in the creation God commanded the plants to bring forth fruit according to their kinds, so in the regeneration he commanded all Christians to bring forth good fruit, good works, according to each one's vocation. Saul clothed David with his own garments and put a helmet of brass upon his head and armed him with a coat of mail. David having girded his sword, began to try if he could walk in the armor, for he was not accustomed to it. And he said to Saul: I cannot walk thus, for I am not used to it. And he laid it off. Now, when you tell me that you cannot walk thus, that is, that you cannot perform heroic works of virtue, I advise you to do what you can, live according to your vocation, fulfil the duties of your respective states of life, and you will be saved.

Do not say that the many dangers to which you are exposed render your good resolutions fruitless, that the many temptations and occasions of sin which frequently beset you on all sides gain the mastery over you, for this is silly talk. I ask you: What did they do who went before you, and who now have the palm of victory in their hands? By battling against the world, the flesh and the devil, they became saints. They were not of a better nature than you, but they had a better and stronger will; therefore they led a better life. They were aware of the corruption of human nature as well as we are, but they conquered it, and by the life they led they teach us to overcome our sloth and tepedity, and by the felicity they now enjoy they teach us not to despair of salvation.

Hence it is a foolish notion with some people to think and to say that their state of life, their business and occupations, hinder them from becoming saints, and that living in the world they must live according to the maxims of the world. In the midst of sinful Babylon, amidst dangers and temptations, man can lead a holy life. In the greatest darkness you can shine like a bright star, as Daniel did among the Chaldeans, and Joseph in the midst of the Egyptians; for our state of life, business and occupations, dangers and temptations are not the cause of our disorders, for these arise from our weak will which yields to temptations. Many are valiant soldiers in battle against the enemy, but cowards when fighting against their unruly passions. Many are wise, circumspect and prudent in their temporal affairs, but care-

less about the salvation of their souls. Many are rich, but instead of laying· up treasures for the kingdom of heaven they purchase damnation for themselves. Not all are called to the same degree of sanctity, for as star differs from star in glory, so does the life of one Christian differ from that of another. In our Father's house there are many mansions. There are souls whom God by a special grace detaches from the love of all earthly things, and who easily attain the height of perfection, but there are others who are destined for the world, who walk slowly but surely in the way of perfection, souls weak, but humble and faithful. The former, like eagles, by the strength of their virtue soar aloft through the clouds and behold the Sun of Justice; the latter bewailing their imperfections, fly, like doves, just above the ground and thus arrive at that perfection which is consistent with their state of life. What does this mean? It means that not only we must be holy, but also that we can be holv, because God supports our weakness, because so many have gone before us, and, moreover, because nothing more is required of us than to be faithful in little things and to fulfil conscientiously the duties of our respective stations in life.

We must, we can, be holy, and oh, that all would earnestly strive for the immort.· . crown of glory. God has ordained that we must acquire felicity prepared for us from the foundation of the world by suffering and by good works. The Bible calls eternal beatitude a *reward,* therefore we must labor for it; it calls it a *crown ofjustice,* therefore we must fight for it, even unto death, against the enemies of our salvation and conquer them; it calls it the *Promised Land* flowing with milk and honey, to enter which we must pass through the Red Sea and the desert, through the crucible of sufferings and afflictions. Such was the life of the saints; they had to suffer and thus to enter into glory. All those whom Christ calls blessed in the gospel of this festival suffered poverty, persecution, hunger and thirst for justice' sake. They were sure to reap in gladness what they had sown in tears. They walked the strait way that leads to life, and are now in the enjoyment of perfect peace and happiness.

peroration.

It is truly deplorable to see so many live in entire forgetfulness of heaven, as if they had no right and title to the crown of eternal glory. Plunged in earthly cares and grovelling in their attachment to temporal concerns, engrossed with worldly affairs, and indulging in illicit pleasures, they forget the end for which they were created. Many, because they do not appreciate what

is eternal, would be satisfied if God would allow them to remain for ever upon earth; they would willingly renounce their right and title to heaven. What an infatuation? Let us then aspire to perfection and sanctity. God commands us to be holy, and we can be holy, for he commands nothing that is impossible, but supports our weakness by his grace; we can do all things in him who strengthens us. Let us learn from the saints how to overcome our spiritual enemies, and how like them to win an eternal recompense from him who gives us grace to endure even to the end. Amen.

ALL SOULS' DAY.

Epistle.—*I. Cor.* **15:51-57. Brethren: Behold, I tell you*** mystery: We shall all indeed rise again: but we shall not all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound; and the dead shall rise again incorruptible: and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption: and this mortal must put on immortality. And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is writen: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? Now the sting of death is sin: and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel.—*John* 5: 25-29. At that time Jesus said to the multitude of the Jews: Amen, amen, I say unto you, that the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given to the Son also to have life in himself. And he hath given him power to do judgment, because he is the Son of man. Wonder not at this; for the hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.

FIRST SKETCH.

IT IS A HOLY AND WHOLESOME THOUGHT TO SUCCOR THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins.—II. Mach. 12: 46.

There is scarcely a doubt that of the millions of men who die every year few are saved without being obliged to pass through

purgatory. If I except the children who die in baptismal innocence, I do not hesitate to say that among thousands scarcely one will be found so good and just as to be admitted into heaven immediately after death. St. Catharine of Genoa says that no one, however holily he may live, escapes purgatory, unless he has already had it in this world in the shape of severe and lingering sufferings. Many souls will have to suffer in purgatory not only for a few days or months, but for years, perhaps many years; hence the Church approves and sanctions the commemoration of the anniversaries of the deaths of those who have departed this life ages ago. The Church to-day directs our thoughts to the departed and exhorts us to succor them. We should do this, for "it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." Let us meditate to-day on these words of the Holy Ghost, and consider that it is—

I. A holy, and
II. A wholesome thought to succor the souls in purgatory.

Part I.

It is a holy thought, that is, an action and exercise most pleasing to God, to succor the poor souls in purgatory, for—

i. *Love* urges us to it. As Christians we are required to love all men. "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."—*John* 13: 34, 35. True, genuine love manifests itself especially by benevolence and mercy to the afflicted and needy, and renders assistance wherever it can. The state of the poor souls is most sad—

(a.) Because to their great sorrow they are deprived of the sight of God. Think of the Jews during their captivity in Babylon. They went about sad and silent, a great grief weighing on their hearts. Sitting by the rivers of Babylon they longingly turned their eyes towards Jerusalem, while tears of sadness streamed down their cheeks. When the Babylonians urged them to be joyful, saying, "Sing ye to us a hymn of the songs of Sion," full of sadness and grief they replied: "How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?"—*Ps.* 136: 1-4. And they did not sing, but sighed and wept in a way that would have moved to compassion a heart of stone. You have here a faint picture of the pitiable condition of the poor souls in purgatory. They have the most ardent desire for God, the only object of their love, and have no other **wish**

than to be united with him. They incessantly turn their eyes towards the heavenly Jerusalem, and say with David: "When shall I come and appear before the face of God?"—*Ps.* 41: 3. But their sighs are in vain, their exertions are fruitless, for the stains with which they are as yet contaminated hinder them from seeing the face of God. Since these poor souls feel most acutely their separation from God, does not Christian charity appeal to us to have mercy on them and to assist them as far as we can that they may soon be admitted to the beatific vision?

(à) *Because they are, moreover, most cruelly tormented.* We do not know for certain the nature of their pains, but it is the universally accepted opinion that they have to pass through a fire wherein, by some means known only to God, they render that satisfaction for their sins which they neglected here, and are then admitted into heaven. The words of the Apostle imply as much: "If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."—*I. Cor.* 3: 15. The Apostle in this passage speaks of souls who appear before the judgment-seat of God with works contaminated by the stain of sin. These souls, he says, are not rejected, but will be saved, yet so as by fire; that is, by a purification which resembles that effected by fire. But whether that is a real fire, or whether the purification takes place as if effected by real fire, we must conclude that the pains of purgatory are very great. In the whole creation we know of nothing that causes greater pain than fire. St. Augustine says: "Although the poor souls are saved by fire, yet this fire will be more painful than anything whatsoever that man is able to suffer in this world." And St. Thomas of Aquin teaches that the least pain in purgatory is severer than the greatest pain in this world.

(r.) *Because they cannot help themselves in the least.* So long as we live upon earth we have various means of atoning for the temporal punishment due to our sins and of acquiring merits for heaven. Such means are the holy sacraments and indulgences, exercises of devotion, mortification and works of mercy, and especially the patient endurance of the sufferings and tribulations of life. But the poor souls can no longer merit anything for themselves; for them the night has come in which no man can work; nothing remains for them but to suffer until they have paid the last farthing of their debt. Should not their helpless condition, their great need, move us to mercy and compassion?

2. *Gratitude* urges us.

(a.) Who are the souls that suffer such excruciating torments in purgatory? Many of them are our relatives, benefactors and

friends. How many of you may have a father or a mother in eternity. Consider how much good both for body and soul you have received from your parents. Consider what they have done and endured for you and for love of you. Should you be unconcerned about their sufferings, do nothing to free them from this place of torment, and assist them to reach heaven? Can you have the heart to shut your ears to their entreaties in their great need? How many of you may have a wife, a husband, a brother, a sister, a son, a daughter, a near relative, or a dear friend numbered among the dead. A short time ago they were still in your midst, sat at table with you, prayed and worked with you, and did you many acts of kindness. They now suffer the greatest torments in purgatory; it is in your power to release them. They cry to you: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, for the hand of the Lord has touched me." Is it not just that you pray for them, that God may comfort them and give them eternal rest?

(à) But how often is the proverb fulfilled: "Out of sight, out of mind." When Alexander the Great died he bequeathed his whole empire to his generals; and it was thirty years after his death before he received a decent funeral. The heirs quarreled about his lands, each one wished to get the largest and best portion, but they cared nothing about having the corpse of their benefactor decently interred. Such detestable conduct does not occur among Christians; the children, the wife or the husband and the relatives make a provision for the burial of their dead as soon as possible; but this, in most cases, is all that is done for them. The heirs take possession of their goods without troubling themselves any further about the fate of their benefactor. They seldom say an *Our Father* for them ,and it never occurs to them to have a mass said for them occasionally, to apply an indulgence to them, or to offer a good work in their behalf, and, what is more, they often refuse to pay the legacies which the departed person made for the benefit of his soul. Is not this acting very ungratefully towards the dead? Come, therefore, to the relief of the poor souls, for it is a holy thought, a duty of Christian love and gratitude.

Part IL

It is a *-wholesome* thought to succor the poor souls It is wholesome—

1. *For them.* Witnesses are—

(a.) The ancient JenoSy with whom it was an article of faith, that the dead can be helped by prayer, sacrifices and other good works. Thus Judas Machabeus sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem, with the request to have sacrifices offered for those Jews who had been slain in battle.—*II. Mach. 12. If the Jews were* wrong in believing thus, our Blessed Lord would have corrected their error, for he came to correct errors, and everywhere to give testimony to the truth. But we do not find anywhere in the four gospels that Christ ever condemned this belief of the Jews; it naturally follows, therefore, that he approved of it

(à.) The Fathers ofthe Church. Tertullian imposes it as a duty on widows to offer gifts for sacrifice for theirdeparted husbands on the anniversary of their death and to pray for them. St. Cyprian in his last will and testament says: "My brethren, come to me and prepare my departure, for all my strength is gone. Accompany me with psalms and prayers and have the charity to offer the holy sacrifice for me constantly. When the thirtieth day shall be fulfilled, recall me to your mind; for the dead are sustained by the sacrifice of the living." As the son of Mathathias by means of sacrifices could free from their sins those who were slain in battle, how much more help will the priests of Christ afford to the suffering souls by their sacrifices and prayers? St. Cyril of Jerusalem says: "There (in the holy sacrifice) we pray for the holy Fathers and bishops who have died, and in general for all who have departed this life in communion with us, for we believe that the souls of those for whom prayers are offered obtain great relief while the holy and august Victim lies upon the altar."

(cj The history ofall ages. From the beginning Christians were anxious to succor their departed coreligionists, to help them by prayer, the sacrifice of the mass and good works. We find a beautiful example in the life of St. Perpetua, who died a martyr at Carthage, in the year 202. She relates the visions with which she was favored, as follows: "A few days after receiving the sentence of death, when we were all together engaged in prayer, I happened to mention Dinocrates, at which I was astonished, because he had never before been in my thoughts, and at that moment I knew that I ought to pray for him. This I began to do with great fervor, and the same night I had the following vision: I saw Dinocrates coming out of a dark place, where there were many others and he seemed exceedingly hot and thirsty; his face was dirty, his complexion pale from the effects of the ulcer in his face, of which he died at the age of seven years. The distance betwen us seemed to be great, so that it was impossible

for us to come to each other. Near him stood a vessel full of water, the brim of which was higher than the stature of an infant: he attempted to drink, but he could not reach it. This deeply-grieved me, and I awoke. By this I knew that my brother was in pain, but I trusted that by prayer I could relieve him; so I began to pray for him, beseeching God with tears day and night that he would grant my request; this I continued to do until we were removed to the damp prison, being destined for a public show on the festival of Caesar Geta. The day we were in the stocks (a wooden machine containing holes in which the prisoners' feet were fastened and cruelly stretched to increase their torment) I had the following vision: I saw the place which I had previously beheld dark, now luminous; Dinocrates, his body very clean, and well clad, was refreshing himself, and instead of his wound I saw a scar only. I awoke, and knew that he was released from pain." From the conclusion which St Perpetua was led to form from her two visions it evidently appears that the Church in that early age believed in the expiation of certain sins after death, and in the efficacy of prayer for the faithful departed. St. Teresa relates a similar event. A priest to whom she was under many obligations died. Hearing the news of his death she was very sad and concerned for the salvation of his soul; for she was well aware that, as a priest, having for twenty years the care of souls, his responsibility before God was great. She, therefore, besought God to accept all the good this priest had done in this life and to supply the deficiency out of the treasure of the merits of Christ. After having prayed thus with great fervor, she saw the soul of the priest emerge from the depths of the earth and ascend into heaven manifesting expressions of the greatest joy; whereat she was greatly consoled, for she now felt sure that the departed had been admitted to the vision of God.

2. *For us.* Acts of charity which we perform for the poor souls will be rewarded—

(a.) *By God.* All works of charity and mercy which we do for others are most pleasing to God, and will be rewarded by him in time and in eternity. "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the evil day."—*Ps.* 40: 2. Christ himself praises the merciful and calls them blessed, and St. Paul assures us that acts of kindness, charity, alms, etc., reap abundant fruit—*II. Cor.* 9. The same may be said of works of mercy for the souls of the faithful departed, for they belong to the communion of saints, and are our brothers and sisters. Whether you show mercy to them, or to one of God's poor on earth, the words of Christ hold good: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my

least brethren, you did it to me."—*Matt.* 25: 40. For the mercy you show to the souls of the faithful departed God will impart to you temporal blessings and many graces for the salvation of your souls; he will be a gracious judge to you hereafter, and, if you have to suffer in purgatory, will raise up for you charitable friends who will take an active interest in your welfare and assist in obtaining your eternal rest.

(3.) *By the poor souls.* What will be the conduct of the poor souls toward us, after our death, when we must suffer in purgatory? Will they forget us or be unconcerned about our fate? By no means; they will be our most fervent intercessors with God, and will do all they can to hasten our entrance into heaven. And we cannot doubt the efficacy of the intercessory prayers of such souls who are already in heaven, for the prayer of the just man availeth much.—*James* 16. The poor souls do not, however, wait till they have reached heaven to show their gratitude to us; they repay us even now by kind acts in various ways. They protect us in dangers of body and soul, obtain for us grace to do penance, gain for us help in temptations, assist us powerfully in the hour of death and beseech for us a gracious judgment and a blessed eternity.

PERORATION.

Thus it is a holy and wholesome thought to succor the souls of the faithful departed. The benefits which we bestow upon them are, as it were, a capital, which brings us interest both for time and eternity. Renew, then, to-day, your fervor of charity for the poor souls detained in the prison of purgatory, and do all in your power to shorten their time of suffering and to open heaven for them. Pray for them and, if your means will admit of it, sometimes have the holy sacrifice offered for their repose, and offer up for them the masses you hear. Apply to them also some indulgences; give alms with the intention that it may be applied to their benefit. Rest assured that God will richly reward the love you show t rose helpless souls; he will be gracious to you in the hour of death, and on the day of judgment will conduct you into the mansions of eternal rest and peace. Amen,

SECOND SKETCH.

THE CRY OF THE SOULS IN PURGATORY TO US.

Friend, lend me three loaves.—Luke **11:5.**

The efficacy of continued, fervent prayer our dear Lord one day illustrated to his disciples by a very consoling example: A man went to a friend's house at midnight, asking him to lend him three loaves of bread, because he had nothing to set before a friend of his who had come off his journey to visit him. We may easily imagine, that this petition, at midnight, was very inopportune to the friend, who with his children, had retired to rest for the night; he, therefore, refused the petitioner, in these words: "Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee."—*Luke* 11:7. But he does not go away. On the contrary, he continues knocking the longer and louder, and because of his importunity, his friend rises from his couch more unwillingly than willingly, opens the door and gives him the three loaves. This petition, "Friend, lend me three loaves," the souls detained in the prison of purgatory address to us on this day of All Souls, for they are certainly in greater distress and need our help far more than the petitioner mentioned in the gospel. They cry out to us at midnight, in the dark night, *i. e.*, from the dismal prison in which they are detained; they call us their friends, and ask us to lend them three loaves of bread. Let us contemplate this cry for help of the suffering souls, and reflect upon it word for word.

I. Friend,
II. Lend,
III. Me, and Hnally,
IV. Three loaves.

Part I.—"Friend."

The suffering souls in purgatory cry out to us: *Friend,* and justly, for we are related to them both *spiritually* and *corporally.*

1. *Spiritually.* Our spiritual relationship with the suffering souls consists in this, that we and they are members of the One Church, which will exist until the end of the world in a triple state; *militant* upon earth, *suffering* in purgatory, and *triumphant* in heaven. By reason of this triple relationshio—

(a.) *We believe* that there is a place called purgatory, in which the souls who depart this life without being perfectly cleansed from all imperfections are detained and must suffer until they have fully satisfied the justice of God. This faith is founded upon *Scripture, tradition,* and *reason.* In the Old Testament we read: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."—*II. Mach.* 12:46. St. Paul writes: "If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."—*I. Cor.* 3:15. The Apostle here speaks of a state in the other world in which souls are tried by fire for a certain period; or, in other words, he speaks of purgatory. Of the Fathers of the Church who give testimony to the existence of purgatory I shall mention only one, St. Gregory of Nyssa, who says: "If any one has departed this life knowing the difference between virtue and vice, he cannot approach the Deity until a purifying fire has obliterated the stains with which the soul is contaminated." Reason also teaches us that there is a purgatory. How many people die who have not been guilty of mortal sins, but are not free from lesser faults. Where will they go? To heaven? Impossible, because nothing defiled can enter heaven. To hell? By no means. For it would be contrary to the mercy and justice of God to condemn man to hell for all eternity on account of a few small faults, counterbalanced by a living faith and numerous good works. Hence, there must be a middle place where souls are detained until they have rendered that full satisfaction to God which they neglected here; after which they are admitted into heaven.

(3.) *We hope* that with the suffering souls we shall one day be admitted into heaven, for which we are still combating, and they suffering. Is it not right that we should assist those suffering souls, as far as we can, to attain the happy end for which they sigh and to which we also aspire, and where we wish one day to be united with them for ever? Indeed, if a person takes no interest in the suffering souls, and does nothing for their relief, we should conclude that he is not solicitous for his own salvation and has no desire to be numbered among the elect in heaven. But such a disposition would evidently be unchristian, and would lead, not to heaven, but to hell.

(c.) *We love* the suffering souls, and endeavor to help them as much as we can in their great need. Consider the members of our body, what sympathy one has for the other; how willingly they assist one another whenever it may be necessary. For instance, if a hand is wounded, is it not the eyes that carefully look at the wound, the tongue that asks for help, the feet that move to obtain the appropriate remedies, the other hand that applies the remedies? Now, since all Catholics, whether living upon

earth, suffering in purgatory, or triumphing in heaven, are members of one body, should there not be the same sympathy, the same love as between the members of a natural body? Should we not in particular be ready and willing to succor the suffering souls in their utmost need? Would it not be a violation of Christian charity, if we left them without help in their need?

2. *Corporally.* In a wider sense we are corporally related to the suffering souls, beause we have a human nature in common with them, and like them are descendants of the first human pair, Adam and Eve. There subsists, however, a still closer corporal relationship between us and the suffering souls. There is scarcely one among us who has not lost by death a father or mother, or perhaps both parents, a brother or sister, a wife or husband, a son or a daughter, or other near relations. These departed souls, in all probability, do not yet enjoy the beatific vision; they are suffering perhaps for faults committed on your account; and should you be indifferent towards them? Should you neglect to console them in their abandonment and to assist them to reach heaven? Would this not be very uncharitable, would it not be sinning against the debt of gratitude which you owe them, since they, while on earth, did so much good for you? Would it be right for you, children, scarcely ever to say an *Our Father* for your parents, who during their life toiled so hard and did so much for you, and who, perhaps for faults committed on your account, are suffering in purgatory? Would you deserve the name of grateful children? And with what eyes would your parents look upon you, when you meet them in eternity. Take care, then, that you do not violate the love and gratitude which you owe the suffering souls, who are spiritually and corporally related to you.

Part II.—"Lend."

The suffering souls in purgatory do not cry out to us: *Give,* but *Lend.* They ask no help of us without requital, but only, to speak, to lend them help. What we do for them is, as it were, capital, which will be returned to us with interest. The benefits which we confer on these suffering souls will be richly repaid—

i. *By themselves.* When Joseph of Egypt was in prison he said to the chief butler of Pharaoh, to whom he had foretold his deliverance from prison and reinstatement in office: 'Only remember me when it shall be well with thee, and do me this kindness, to put Pharaoh in mind to take me out of this prison."—*Gen.* 40: 14. But the butler forgot his benefactor for two years, and probably would have forgotten him for ever if he had not been

reminded of him by a special event. Not so the suffering souls. They do not forget us when all is well with them in heaven, but remember us in grateful love for the good we did them while in prison. They supplicate God graciously to keep from us all that may injure us in soul or body, to preserve us in his love, to grant us a happy death, and after our departure from this world to give us eternal rest and to let perpetual light shine upon us. We may also believe with many theologians that the suffering souls even while in purgatory intercede with God for us and obtain many benefits for us; for although they are not able to help themselves or acquire merits, they can pray for us, and since God loves them there is no doubt that he will graciously hear them. St. Catherine of Bologna testifies that she obtained many graces and benefits through the intercession of the suffering souls, even such as she could not obtain through the intercession of the saints in heaven.

2. *From heaven.* If we show ourselves merciful towards the suffering souls, we gain the gratitude of the whole heavenly court. The angels and saints will look down upon us with particular pleasure, because by the release of these souls we increase their number and also their joy in heaven. If according to the words of Christ they rejoice so much over the conversion of one sinner, who, because he is still capable of sinning, is not entirely sure of heaven, how much more will they rejoice over the release of the suffering souls, since they are sure of their eternal salvation. We thereby even confer a favor upon our Blessed Lord himself, for he loves them and ardently desires to see them with him in heaven. Finally, by our mercy and compassion for the suffering souls we merit the love of the Blessed Trinity; for these souls, if I may be permitted to use the expression, are daughters of God the Father, sisters of God the Son, and spouses of God the Holy Ghost, aud are deprived of the blessed vision of the most Holy Trinity, because they are still defiled by the stains of some imperfections.

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Part III.—«Me."

Every suffering soul cries out to us: *Me,* in order to express thereby her great torments. And indeed their sufferings are great —

(a.) *On account of the pain of loss,* since they are banished from heaven and the vision of God, for whom they long most ardently. To get an idea of this pain, represent to yourselves a man who is tormented by extreme hunger and thirst. He sees before him a table supplied with the best food and drink, but he can touch

nothing, although he knows that all has been prepared for him; will not his sorrow be very great? Similarly situated are the suffering souls. Separated from the burden of the body, from sensual enjoyments and from all the distractions of the world, their thoughts are directed exclusively to God, the centre and object of all beauty and loveliness; they feel within themselves an irresistible impulse to be united with him; they know too that they are destined to possess God and the unspeakable joys of heaven; how painful therefore must it be to them that they cannot possess the object of their most ardent desires! How often and how fervently must they not say with the Psalmist: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God? My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?"—*Ps.* 41: 2-4.

2. *On account of the pain of sense,* that is, on account of the real pain which they have to endure. The holy Fathers unanimously teach that these pains are very great, and that no earthly sufferings can be compared with them. St. Augustine says: "Although we are saved by fire, yet that fire will be more severe than anything whatsoever that man can endure in this life." St. Gregory the Great says: "I believe that the passing fire (in purgatory) is more intolerable than every present pain." Venerable Bede is of opinion that no punishment of the martyrs can be compared with the purifying punishments of the suffering souls. From these and similar expressions of the holy Fathers we may infer the greatuess of the pains which the suffering souls in purgatory have to endure. How great were the sufferings of the martyrs! We shudder when we hear or read of the tortures they endured! How much misery there is in this world! Who can describe the pains which people often have to endure in their sickness! And yet these pains are nothing in comparison to what the souls in purgatory have to suffer. There is no difference between the pains of hell and those of purgatory except that the former will last for ever, and the latter will end in glory; the souls of the damned suffer in despair, the souls in purgatory are inflamed with love and they are comforted by angels. What wonder, then, that these poor souls stretch out their arms to us, exclaiming: "Me, me!" "Lend me!" "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, for the hand of the Lord has stricken me." "Oh, help me, because I am fearfully tormented, and am unable to help myself. Help me, that I may be freed from my torments and may be permitted to enter into the eternal rest of heaven."

VI

Part IV.—"Three Loaves."

What are these three loaves for which the suffering souls pray?

I. *The white loaf,* or the *holy sacrifice of the mass.* Judas Machabeus caused sacrifices to be offered for the dead, of which the Scripture says, that they were wholesome. Now, if the sacrifices of the Old Law, which consisted only of animals and fruits, were wholesome for the dead, what rich blessing must the adorable sacrifice of the mass, which is the crucified God-man, Jesus Christ himself, afford to the suffering souls! Hence in the earliest ages of Christianity the sacrifice of the mass was offered for the dead. Thus Tertullian, in the second century, numbers it amongst the duties of a pious widow to have the sacrifice of the mass offered for her deceased husband on the anniversary of his death. St. Augustine declares prayer and sacrifice for the repose of the souls of the departed to be an Apostolic ordinance, saying: "As throughout the whole world the sacrifice is offered for the repose of the souls of the faithful departed, and prayers are said for them, we believe that it is an Apostolic Tradition; for it is everywhere observed by the Catholic Church." From the most ancient liturgies we perceive, that from the beginning, as to-day, a memento was made for the dead, and the fruits of the sacrifice of the mass were applied to them. Hence the Council of Trent teaches that the prayers of the faithful, but especially the holy sacrifice of the mass, are very useful to the souls in purgatory.

2. *The loaf,* which we use daily, or *frayer,* which we offer for the suffering souls, *e. g.,* the "Our Father," "Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them," the Rosary, the Way of the Cross. That our prayers are of benefit to the suffering souls is evident from the Sacred Scripture: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from sins" Prayer for the faithful departed was customary in the primitive ages of the Church, and St. Chrysostom expressly remarks that it was ordained by the Apostles that the departed should be remembered at the celebration of the holy mysteries. St. Ephrem, in his last testament, desires that prayers should be offered for him after his death. The emperor Constantine the Great ordained that his body should be interred in the church, that he might become a participator in the prayers said by the faithful in that place. And St. Monica, shortly before her death, said to her son, St. Augustine: "Lay this body anywhere; be not concerned about that. The only thing I ask of you is, that you make remembrance of me at the

altar of the Lord wherever you are." St. Augustine scrupulously complied with the wish of his mother; he prayed for her himself and conjures all readers of his confessions to pray for her.

3. *The loaf,* which is usually given to the poor, or *alms.* The constant belief of the Church proves that the souls in purgatory can be helped by alms and other works of mercy. St. Augustine says: "Without doubtthe worksofmercy whereby we recommend the departed (to God's mercy) are of great advantage to them, but I speak of those departed, who have so spent their life that after death they are not unworthy of such help." Again he says: "There is no doubt that the faithful departed are helped by the prayer of the Church, by the wholesome sacrifice (mass), and by alms, which are offered for them, so that God deals with them more according to his mercy than their sins have deserved." And he adds: "The whole Church acts according to this tradition which she has received from the Fathers." If, then, you give alms, or perform other good works, with the intention of applying the fruits thereof to the suffering souls, they are helped by them. This is particularly true of indulgences, which we can apply to the souls in purgatory by way of suffrage.

PERORATION.

Let us then show sympathy and mercy to the souls in purgatory. Their cry to us is: *Friend, lend me three loaves. Friend,* because they are spiritually and corporally related to us, therefore, love and gratitude oblige us to succor them. *Lend,* they cry out to us, because they, and the whole heavenly court, will return with interest the good we do them. *Me,* they cry out to us, making known to us their great need, which is beyond expression, in order to move us to mercy and compassion. *Three loaves,* they cry out, beseeching us to help them through the sacrifice of the mass, prayer, works of mercy and charity. Let us listen to their cry, and do what they so urgently and entreatingly ask of us. Not only to-day and during this week, but as long as we live we should be merciful towards them, and do what we can to release them from their prison, that they may enjoy the vision of God. The love and mercy shown to those poor souls will prove to be of benefit to ourselves, for the words of Christ will be accomplished in us: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."—*Matt.* 5: 7. Amen.

rniRD SKETCH.

THREE GLANCES AT THE CEMETERY,

Only the grave remaineth for me.— Job 17:1.

On this day, and during the Octave, the faithful everywhere are accustomed to visit the graves. Many even take long journeys in order to adorn the graves of their parents, brothers and sisters, or other near friends and acquaintances, and to recite some devout prayers there. This custom of visiting the graves is very laudable and in every way appropriate, being very wholesome both for us and for the departed; for us, because the cemetery produces in us a devout frame of mind, and causes us to make good resolutions to amend our life; for the departed, because the graves vividly remind us of our departed friends and fellow-Christians, and call upon us to pray for the repose of their souls. Since to visit the graves is of benefit both for you and for the departed, I exhort you to cast—

I. One glance upon the graves;
II. One glance into the graves, and
III. One glance beyond the graves.

Part I.

When we look round about us in a cemetery we see graves of every description.

i. *Some have a Christian character and some have not. K Christian* grave is known by the *cross,* which is placed upon it; for the cross is the Christian's mark and sign. If you enter a house and notice in it the pictute of the Crucified, you judge the inmates to be Christians. If you see a man sign himself with the sign of the cross, you say within yourselves: This man is a Christian. You think and say the same when you see a grave with a cross upon it. Being Catholics, should we not place crosses upon the graves of our departed fellow-Catholics and provide that our own grave, when we are dead, be adorned with a cross? By the crosses upon the graves we profess that we, and the departed, are Christians, that we highly esteem our holy faith, and that Jesus Christ, who died on the cross, is our only hope in life and death. Crosses upon the graves are also an admonition to us to follow Christ on the way of the cross, as he himself says: "If ?ny

man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."—*Matt.* 16: 24.

2. *Some monuments and tombstones are richly carved and ornamented; others are plain. On some graves there is no monument.* I do not find fault, if the rich erect handsome and even costly monuments to the memory of their dear departed, but it should not be done from a motive of pride and vain ostentation, but only to honor them and to show them due love and gratitude. Extravagance, however, is not to be commended; the money would certainly be better expended if given as an alms for the repose of the soul of the departed, or as a charitable endowment fund, instead of erecting a costly monument. After all, it matters little whether one has a more or less magnificent monument, provided that one is happy in eternity. The saints, even those who were of noble extraction, prohibited pompous funerals and magnificent mausoleums, and ordained that they themselves should be plainly buried and their grave adorned only with a cross. Be careful lest in in the erection of monuments and tombstones to the memory of your dear departed friends you are governed by vain ostentation instead of Christian modesty. There are, however, graves which have no monuments at all, nothing is to be seen on them, and yet they have left children, friends and acquaintances behind, and have, perhaps, bequeathed them a rich inheritance. Such heirs act very ungratefully in not erecting to their benefactors even a plain tombstone, and when one day they appear before the judgment-seat of God he will certainly not commend them for their penuriousness. If we lead a pious life, do much good for the honor of God and the salvation of man, and bequeath a blessed memory to our posterity, we erect to ourselves a monument more enduring and more magnificent than any this world can give.

3. *Some are adorned with flowers.* To adorn the grave with flowers is a beautiful and laudable custom, which has also an approprietate signification. The flowers on the graves remind us of the words of pious Job: "Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries. Who cometh forth like a flower, and is destroyed, and fleeth like a shadow."— *Job.* 14:1, 3. Nothing is more frail than flowers. The majority bloom only a short time, some only for a few days, or a few hours; they are also very sensitive; the least frost, cold air, even a few drops of rain, deprive them of their tender life. Is it otherwise with the life of man? May we not justly call ourselves men of to-day? Is not the most trifling thing often sufficient to destroy prematurely that life which is in itself fleeting? And yet many of us are so foolish as to be more solicitous for our frail, corruptible body than for our immortal soul.

Flowers are beautiful to the eye and spread a pleasant odor. Let us, then, when we see them on the graves, make a resolution to rejoice God and man by the sweet odor of a virtuous life, that we may be able to say with the Apostle: "We are the good odor of Christ unto God in them that are saved, and in them that perish."—*II. Cor. 2:* 15. Placed on the graves of the dead, flowers also serve to take off the bare and dull look of the grave and to cover death and decay as much as possible. So far well and good; but it is not right, Christian friend, if without necessity you bring to light the faults and sins of the dead; if you slander and detract them even in the grave, and deprive them of their good name. Such conduct is certainly very uncharitable and so much the more reprehensible owing to the fact that the dead can not defend themselves and obtain justice. Learn, then, from the flowers on the graves to keep silence regarding the faults of the dead, unless an exception be necessary, and remember the proverb, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.* Speak only what is good of the dead.

If we cast a glance into the grave what do we see? We see

I. *What the dead man has in the grave.* Alas! he has nothing but his winding-sheet and the coffin which contains his mouldering body. Though he may have been rich during life, though he may have had millions of money, superb houses, immense possessions, and a lucrative business, he now possesses nothing of all these things; he must say with Job: "Only the grave remaineth for me." The Caliph Hesham, who died at Baspha, in the year 742, possessed seven hundred boxes of gold pieces, and so large a quantity of clothes and silk garments that to remove them from one place to another six hundred camels were required. He had scarcely closed his eyes in death, when his palace was plundered, and not even a basin in which towash his inanimate body, not a piece of linen in which to wrap it for the grave, was left. How poor death made this rich ruler! Did it leave him anything but the grave? How foolishly, then, do Christians act, who fix all their thoughts and cares upon temporal goods and thereby forget God and the salvation of their souls; who suffer themselves to be governed by avarice and covetousness to such an extent that, hard-hearted as they are, they turn the poor and needy from their door, and in their business transactions commit many injustices. Is it not the greatest folly and blindness to forfeit heaven for the sake of such vain, perishable goods, and to incur eternal damnation? Consider this well, and entertain no inordinate love for money and the goods of this world; be solicitous

for temporal goods only in so far as they are necessary for your subsistence in this life and never forget the words of our Lord: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul."—*Matt.* 16: 26.

2. *What the dead man becomes in the grave.* What does he become? You all know. After a few days the body decomposes, becomes mouldy, black and grey spots appear, the skin bursts and a greyish liquid oozes forth, an intolerable stench fills the grave, and would, if it found an exit, infect the air, worms come in the flesh, which is devoured by them, and which falls away from the bones; the head is devoid of hair, flesh and skin; where the mouth, ears and eyes formerly were, now only ghastly hollows are seen; by degrees the flesh disappears, and nothing remains but a skeleton, which also crumbles into dust in the course of time, so that what remains of man is nothing but a handful of dust. Such will be our condition one day: our body will moulder in the grave and return to dust and ashes. Now, as this frail, perishable body has such a miserable end, should you be so anxious to adorn it with fine clothes, to humour it so extravagantly? Should you pride yourself upon its beauty, gratify its lusts and abuse it by sin and vices? When St. Francis Borgia, duke of G-andia, saw the body of Isabella, who in life was consicered the most beautiful of women, but who was now so hideous and so disfigured that the mere sight of it terrified him, he exclaimed: "O Isabella, what is now become of those eyes, that were once so sparkling? Where is now the beauty and charm of that countenance, which we so lately beheld? Are you her gracious majesty, Donna Isabella? Are you my empress, my lady, my mistress?" Returning from the funeral, he locked himself in his chamber, and passed the whole night without sleep. Prostrate on the floor, shedding a torrent of tears, he said to himself: "What is it, my soul, that I seek in the world? How long shall I pursue and grasp at shadows? My God, my God, grant that I may never serve a master whom death can snatch from me." Shortly after he renounced all worldly honors and dignities, entered the Society of Jesus and became a great saint. May a glance into the grave and upon the corpses decaying and mouldering therein induce you to resolve to lead a pious, penitential life, and especially to employ your body always as an instrument in the service of God, mortifying its sinful lusts and permitting nothing contrary to holy purity.

Part III.

In the light of faith we behold beyond the grave three places: heaven, hell and purgatory. In one or the other of these three places are the souls of all that have departed this life.

Which souls are in heaven?

(a.) First of all, the *souls of those children who died in their baptismal innocence.* Happy children! The throes of death for them were slight, since at their tender age they did not know what it is to die, and when their souls were separated from their bodies, they hastened at once to heaven. Such graves of innocent children are numerous in every cemetery; the good God snatches them away in their baptismal innocence, in order to complete the number of the elect in heaven. Christian parents, you must, it is true, be solicitous for the health and life of your children, and conscientiously employ the means necessary for that end; this is your bounden duty; but if God, nevertheless, permits one or the other of your children to die, and if it should be your only one, you must not grieve immoderately on that account, for your departed children are well taken care of, and you, with all your love, care and solicitude would assuredly not have been able to give them anything better than heaven.

(3.) *Those souls which, while on earth, or in purgatory, have made complete satisfaction for all their sins.* I hope and trust in God that in our cemetery there are many graves of such blessed ones. There always have been Catholics in our congregation who led a pious life and served God with zeal. When they died, they had not much to atone for in purgatory, and now they are in heaven. To this class belong many fathers and mothers, who walked in the fear of God, maintained good discipline among their children and servants, and induced them to lead a godly life; many sons and daughters, who in the midst of a depraved and degenerate world preserved their innocence, and by their piety and morality edified the whole congregation; then as regards such as fell again and again and grievously sinned, but truly repented, as they afterwards lived a penitent life and were zealous in doing good, and especially as they endured the sufferings and tribulations of life with patience, they died a happy death and after being detained in purgatory for a longer or shorter period, were admitted into heaven. We may venture to say that in our parish there is scarcely a family which has not saints, either children or adults, in heaven. What an encouragement for us to employ diligently the present time which God in his mercy gives us. How is it possible for sinners, even the greatest, not to feel animated and encouraged on this day to embrace a life of penance, in order to be reconciled with God and to be numbered among the holy penitents in heaven for all eternity?

2. *Which souls are in hell?* Alas! there are many that enter eternity in a state of sin, and faith teaches us that all who die

tn mortal sin are lost for ever. Shall I enumerate these unfortunates? They are the fathers and mothers who had but little religion themselves, who did not bring up their children virtuously and in the fear of God, and who connived at their dissipations and bad conduct. They now suffer a double pain in hell, because they are chastised not only for their own sins but also for the sins of their children which they did not endeavor to prevent. They are those sons and daughters who spent the best years of their life in levity and forgetfulness of God, and hardened their heart against all salutary admonitions. They are those drunkards, married and single, those blasphemers and jesters who by their unchaste discourses, songs and jokes poisoned innocence; those avaricious souls who grudged everything to themselves and others; these unjust persons who commited many injusticesand made no restitution; those vindictive ones who would not hear of reconciliation, and therefore lived and died in enmity; those lukewarm persons who neglected prayer, heard no sermons, read no spiritual books, confessed only once a year, and even then not well, and lived only for the world; finally, all those who did no real penance for their sins, but only a mock penance. Reflect seriously to-day upon the condition of your own soul, whether you are on the road to heaven or hell. Should your conscience tell you that all is not well with you, let the graves of the damned be an earnest invitation to you for a speedy repentance and amendment of life.

Finally, what souls are in purgatory? The souls of the just who departed this life either in venial sin, or who have yet to make some satisfaction to the justice of God for those sins which have been forgiven. Nothing defiled can enter heaven. He who dies in venial sins which have not been forgiven goes to purgatory, and must suffer there till he has atoned for them. St. Gregory of Nyssa says: "If any one has departed this life knowing the difference between good and evil, he cannot approach the Deity until a purifying fire has extinguished the stains with which the soul is contaminated." Those souls also go to purgatory which have obtained the remission of their sins, but have not yet completely cancelled the temporal punishments. Such being the case, the number of Christians dying in advanced age, who will be translated into heaven without purgatory, will be very small, because most of them at their death are either contaminated with venial sins, or have not fully satisfied for their temporal punishments. St. Catherine of Genoa says that only those who have to undergo, and patiently endure, severe and lingering sufferings, can be admitted into heaven, to the vision of God, immediately after their death. Think then to-day of the souls of the faithful departed, detained in the prison of purgatory; descend in thought

into those lower regions and consider what they are suffering·, and do what you can in order to obtain for them eternal repose. Pray for them, have masses offered for them, and apply to them the fruits of alms and other pious and good works. Christian love and gratitude should animate us to espouse zealously the cause of the poor souls in purgatory, since they are our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, many of whom have done us much good in body and soul.

PERORATION.

In conclusion, I exhort you to visit the graves, not only to-day and during the Octave, but also on other occasions, especially on Sundays and holidays. All the graves you see remind you of the perishableness of all things earthly, the shortness of life, the certainty of death, and recall to you the words of holy Scripture: "Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return." —*Gen.* 3: 19. Again, the graves call upon you to disengage your heart from all inordinate love of the world, to set the affairs of your conscience inorder, and to be solicitous for the one thing necessary, the salvation of yovr soul. At the same time the graves admonish you to remember in charity the souls in purgatory and to beseech G-od that he may console and refresh them in their sufferings, shorten the time of their punishment and conduct them into the dwelling of eternal repose. Thus the visits to the graves will prove a blessing both to you and to the suffering souls, and **help** you and them to attain everlasting happiness. Amen.

THE SEASON OF GRACE CALLED A JUBILEE.

FIRST SKETCH.

GENERAL INSTRUCTION.

Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.—*Matt.* **3: 1.**

The same God who tells us that we cannot be saved without faith, tells us that we shall be lost without penance: "Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish." If you have followed David and Mary Magdalene in their sins, follow them also in their sincere and speedy repentance. If you have ever sinned you must do penance. I do not, however, require of you a penance, such as many saints of the Old and of the New Testament performed, *e.g.*, King David, who rose every night to pray and wept over his sins so much that his bed became wet with his tears; or, St. Mary Magdalene, who after the Ascension of our Lord detached herself entirely from the world and its goods, and in a cavern near Marseilles persevered to the end of her life continually watching, praying and practicing various other mortifications; or the great penitent Thais of Egypt, who collecting all her ornaments and precious things in one pile, burned them in the presence of a great multitude of people, and then retired into the solitude of a cell where she spent the remainder of her days on bread and water, and, because she did not dare to mention the name of God, constantly prayed thus: "O thou who hast created me, have mercy on me." Thus, and in a similar manner, thousands of sinners did penance who perhaps were guilty of lesser faults than those of which we must accuse ourselves. But, as I have already said, I do not mean to speak of such extraordinary austerity of penance, all I ask of you is that by a worthy reception of the holy sacraments you free your conscience from sin and henceforth serve God with greater fervor. Such a penance you must perform, because the kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom **is** the Jubilee, which our Holy Father N. N. has proclaimed to

the whole Catholic world. We can justly call this Jubilee the kingdom of God, for if you become participants in its grace, it will obtain for you reconciliation with God, the sweetest consolation of heart, a peace such as the world with all its goods and pleasures cannot give in this life, and hereafter heaven with its unspeakable joys. I, therefore, admonish you to-day to make good use of this Jubilee for your salvation—

I. On account of the great graces offered to you during this holy season,

IL On account of the facility with which you can obtain these graces.

Part I.

If all those were to receive a thousand dollars who during the Jubilee make a good confession, communicate and perform all that is required in order to gain the indulgence of the Jubilee, I think there would hardly be one among us who would not comply with these conditions. Every one would say to himself: A thousand dollars is a large sum of money, and this I can gain more easily than a small sum in any other way; I should not have common sense were I to neglect to avail myself of this splendid opportunity of acquiring such a large sum 0x money. Now, are not the graces which are offered to you during the Jubilee worth more than a thousand dollars? What are a thousand dollars, what are all the treasures of the world, in comparison with the supernatural and eternal goods of which you become sharers, if you employ this time of grace profitably? Let me brieflyrecall to your mind the graces of the Jubilee. They are—

i. *The remission of all sins.* There are sins from which no priest can absolve you except during the time of a Jubilee or other special time of grace. If you confess such a sin, no matter how sincere and contrite you maybe, the priest is obliged to say: My dear child, I would cheerfully and willingly give you absolution, but I cannot; only the bishop or the Pope can a olve you. I must therefore obtain faculties from the bishop or from the Pope before I can give you absolution. If Catholics are married by a Protestant minister it is a sin which the bishop only can absolve; if one has pertinaciously denied or not believed a dogma proposed to our faith by the Catholic Church, *e. g.,* the Infallibility of the Pope in matters of faith and morals, or the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, it would be a sin which the Pope alone can absolve. But during the Jubilee every priest can absolve from all sins reserved to the bishop and the Pope; every priest, therefore, during this season of grace has a

power which at other times a bishop does not possess; he is, as it were, Pope, because the Pope in respect to the forgiveness of sins, has committed to him almost the whole of his spiritual power What a consolation even for the greatest sinner! No one, guilty though he be of the greatest crimes, need fear that he cannot, be absolved; if he only does what is necessary in order to obtain absolution, he will most certainly be absolved and reconciled to God. The words oï the Lord are here applicable: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow: and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool."—*Is.* 1 : 28.

2. *Remission ofecclesiasticalpunishments.* There are sins which incur ecclesiastical punishments. Such a punishment is, *e. g.,* excommunication. A person who on account of an especially grievous sin, *e. g.,* heresy, a duel, freemasonry, etc., falls under the ban of excommunication, is no longer looked upon as a Catholic and is deprived of all the graces and spiritual benefits of the Church. Such a one can not receive the sacraments; no priest can absolve him, not even on his death-bed, unless he is freed from the excommunication; he has no share in the fruits of the holy sacrifice of the mass, his corpse can not be brought to the church; no priest can read the funeral prayers over him, no mass can be said for him, and not a prayer is offered up for the repose of his soul. Excommunication therefore is a far more terrible punishment, extends further and has more unhappy consequences than capital punishment, for this only concerns the temporal life, but the result of the former is eternal damnation, unless it is atoned for by a suitable penance. But during the present Jubilee every priest has the power to absolve from almost all ecclesiastical punishments, and to reinstate him who had incurred them in all the rights to which as a Catholic he is entitled.

^.*Commutation of vows.* Except during the time of a Jubilee no priest has power to commute any vow, much less to annul it. Only bishops and the Pope possess that power. During the time of a Jubilee, however, every priest can commute for some other good works, which are more easily fulfilled, all simple vows, with the exception of the vow of perpetual chastity, or a vow to enter an Order approved by the Church, or vows made in favor of a third person. This also is a great grace; it is oftentimes very difficult to fulfil vows on account of circumstances that intervene, whilst, as long as they are not cancelled or commuted they are binding under the pain of mortal sin, if they have for their object anything of importance. I would, therefore, admonish those who have made a vow which they either can not fulfil at all, or only with the greatest difficulty, to make the same known to the priest in their Jubilee confession and request him to commute it for **so II e other good work.**

4. *Plenary indulgence.* This consists in the remission of all tern, poral punishments. In the Sacrament of Penance, sins together with the eternal punishment, are remitted, but the temporal punishment generally remains and satisfaction must be made for it either in this world or in purgatory. It might easily happen that some of us, it we were to die this moment, would have to suffer many years, perhaps to the end of the world, in order to cancel these temporal punishments. But what is meant by suffering and being obliged to suffer long years in purgatory you will readily understand, if you consider that, according to the testimony of St Augustine and other Doctors of the Church, the pains of purgatory are far more intense than all the pains and sufferings upon earth. How intense were the sufferings of the holy martyrs! We shudder when we read or hear of their tortures; but incomparably greater are the sufferings of the poor souls in purgatory. St. Cyril, of Jerusalem, says: "If all the tortures, sufferings and pains upon earth are compared to the least pain of purgatory, they are a consolation, a refreshment" Now, all these temporal punishments, which you would still have to suffer in purgatory, no matter how long they might last, are remitted during the Jubilee if you gain the plenary indulgence. You are reinstated in your former happy state of perfect innocence and purity as you were after holy baptism, and should you not relapse into sin you would go straight to heaven without passing through purgatory. Is not, then, the grace that is offered to you during the Jubilee a great one? \\rould you not bitterly regret having to acknowledge on your death bed that you had suffered the time of the Jubilee to pass unprofitably to yourself and unacceptably to God?

5. *Certainty of salvation.* It is a truth founded on the Sacred Scriptures and corroborated by many expressions of the Fathers of the Church and theologians, that God gives a certain measure of grace to every man. If a person makes good use of these graces, especially of those received for his conversion, he will certainly be saved, but if he leave them unemployed, he will surely be lost. Reflect well on this. This Jubilee may be for many a one the last grace which God offers him for the salvation of his soul. If he employ it well he will be saved, but if he neglect to avail himself of it he will be damned.

6. *The good of the Church.* As you are all aware, the Church at present suffers great distress. If we except the first three centuries of the persecution of the Christians, and perhaps the great defection from the Church in the sixteenth century, she has at no time been so much and so severely oppressed and persecuted as at present. Wherever we turn our eyes numerous enemies arise against her and aim at her total destruction. The princi-

pal object of our Holy Father in granting this Jubilee is to protect the Church from the attacks of her enemies and to obtain of God peace for her. This end will be attained if we make the proper use of the Jubilee. There is no doubt that the sufferings and persecutions of the Church at the present time are caused principally by the moral corruption of so many Christians. Now, as God was merciful to the Israelites as often as they did true penance for their sins, so will he also avert the present evils and tribulations from the Church, if we earnestly avail ourselves of this season of grace for penance and conversion. If during the Jubilee we make the prescribed visits to the churches and pray fervently, we may hope that God will graciously hear us and protect and defend his Church against all her enemies.

Part II.

Another motive for you to employ the Jubilee for your salvation should be *because of the facility with which you can obtain its graces.* To convince yourself of this you need only consider the works prescribed for the gaining of the Jubilee Indulgence; these are —

I. *A worthy reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.* Above all you must *make a good confession.* To do this it is not sufficient that you sincerely disclose your sins, it is also necessary that you have *true contrition and a firm purpose of amendment.* Some not only think, but also say: "I have always confessed all my sins that I could call to mind. There is nothing wanting in my confessions." What self-delusion! You may confess all your sins in detail a hundred times, but without contrition and a firm purpose of amendment, all your confessions are profitless and invalid. God never forgives a sin that is not accompanied with contrition and a purpose of amendment. Here the all-important and practical question arises to which each of us should give heed: What must we do, and what must we resolve to do in order that our Jubilee confession may not be devoid of contrition and a purpose of amendment? I will illustrate this by a few examples. If you are in the proximate occasion of sin you must it give up. Therefore, if you keep company with a person of the opposite sex and have grievously sinned with her, or if she be to you the occasion of great temptation, you must give up your acquaintance with her; if you do not, you are destitute of true contrition and a firm purpose of amendment, and you will remain excluded from the grace of the Jubilee. If you frequent houses, or entertainments, *e. g.t* balls and theatres, which are to you proximate occasions of sin, you must avoid

these occasions; if you do not, you are destitute of contrition and a purpose of amendment, and do not participate in the benefit of the Jubilee. If you be addicted to a sinful habit, *e.g.,* blaspheming, cursing, uttering obscene and filthy words, getting drunk, sinning against chastity, etc., you must make use of all the means at your disposal, especially those prescribed by your confessor, to disengage yourself from your sinful habits; if you do not do this, you labor in vain to gain the Indulgence of the Jubilee. If you possess goods unjustly, you must, if possible, restore them and repair the damage; if you fail to do this, contrition and a firm purpose of amendment are wanting to you, and you remain excluded from the grace of the Jubilee. If you live at variance with your neighbor, you must be reconciled to him: if you refuse to do so, you have no contrition and no will to do better, consequently, you will obtain no grace, no benefit from the Jubilee. This, then, is the first thing that must be done, if you hope to gain the Indulgence of the Jubilee: you must make a good confession, and do what is required for a true repentance and a firm purpose of amendment. This, certainly, is not so difficult that it cannot be done with the grace of God, if good will be not wanting. It may cost an effort, but what of that when you remember the reward that will follow? If the confession be good, it necessarily follows that the communion will be good, and thus the first and most important requisite for obtaining the plenary Indulgence of the Jubilee is fulfilled.

2. *The visits to the churches.* This condition is easily complied with. You are to make two visits to the three churches selected and there pray for some time according to the intention of the Holy Father. No special prayers are designated; you may say the Rosary, with a litany or the usual prayer for gaining an indulgence, together with seven *Our Fathers* and seven *Hail Marys* and the Apostle's Creed. It is hardly necessary to tell you that you should pray with attention and compunction of heart.

3. *Fasting.* This is an easy condition. Only one fast-day is prescribed. You may select any day during the time of the Jubilee; it must not, however, be one that is already a fast-day or a day of abstinence. On the day which you select you must abstain from the use of flesh-meat and take only one full meal at noon or thereabouts.

4. *Finally, alms-deeds.* Every one who wishes to gain an indulgence must give some alms, no matter whether he oe rich or poor; it is not, however, prescribed how much one must give. A few cents will be sufficient for those who are poor. Parents can give alms for their children. "According to thy ability be merciful.

If thou have much, give abundantly, if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little."—*Tob.* 4: 8, 9. Those whom God has blessed with worldly goods, should open their purse and give abundantly; those who have less may give less, and those who have nothing, need give nothing; but let them pray for the rich, that God may soften their hearts and make then* merciful; God will reward them, "for alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting.—*Tob.* 12: 9.

PERORATION.

Ponder well, therefore, these words in regard to the Jubilee and avail yourself of this season of grace. Consider that this may be the last Jubilee which many of you will ever live to see proclaimed, and that those who allow this time to pass unheeded expose their salvation to great danger. Endeavor above all to make a good confession, and scrupulously comply with the other conditions necessary to gain the Indulgence, and having gained it, continue to serve God with fervor so that you may hope to die a good death and be saved.

SECOND SKETCH.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MARRIED MEN.

Blessed is the man that ieareth the Lord: he shall delight exceedingly in his commandments.—Ps. ▮▮▮: 1.

I am delighted to see you assembled here in such large numbers, for this inspires me with the hope that you have a good will and are resolved to follow the instructions I am about to give you. You are the heads of your families, as also the most important and influential persons of the entire congregation. To you the adage can truly be applied: "As the shepherd, so the flock." The eyes of your children and domestics are turned to you; if you maintain good discipline among them and set them a good example, they will follow you in the path of virtue and serve God all the days of their lives. You have assembled to day to be instructed in regard to the duties of your state of life. These duties are of the greatest importance; they are sacred duties; they constitute an essential part of the service of God and upon the faith-

fui and conscientious fulfilment of them depends your eternal salvation. As the instructions which I have to give you on your duties concern you only, and as several things must be mentioned which others need not know, in fact, should not know, you alone are present. You have, as I shall briefly explain to you, duties—

I. Towards your wives;
II. Towards your children and servants;
III. Towards your neighbors.

Part I.

All the duties which you have towards your wives can be summed up in *one,* namely, *love,* according to the admonition of the Apostle: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it."—*Ephes.* 5: 25. Christian matrimony is a figure of the union of Christ with his Church, *i. e.,* with the congregation of all the faithful; the husband representing Christ, the wife, the Church. The love of Christ for his Church, therefore, Christian husbands, must be tne model of your love for your wives. It must be—

i. *A chaste love.* Some married people imagine that there is no chastity in the maried state, that everything is permissible, and that they are allowed to give full scope to their carnal lust. What an error! Know you that a devil, called Asmodius, killed on their bridal night seven men who were successively married to Sara, because of their lust? A Father of the Church does not hesitate to assert that on account of the vice of impurity more married than single persons will be lost. I cannot and will not enter upon this subject at length, but only confine myself to a few remarks and advise you in doubts to seek counsel in the confessional. The chief end for which God instituted matrimony, and for which Christ raised it to the dignity of a sacrament is, that by the nuptial union children may be lawfully begotten, and with the united help of the married couple reared as Christians in the fear of God, the human race honorably propagated on earth and the number of the elect increased in heaven. This end you must constantly bear in mind and, therefore, in your nuptial intercourse abstain from everything that tends to oppose or frustrate it.

(λ.) The mere gratification of carnal lust should not be the reason why you have entered into matrimony or make use of your marriage rights; for he who in any instance, even, *e. g.,* in eating and drinking, seeks to gratify his sensual appetite, acts irrationally, like the brute beasts. Although certain actions are permitted to the married couple, and are even a duty, which are

strictly forbidden to others, yet they should not be performed solely for the gratification of the sensul appetite. For this would at least be a venial, if not a mortal sin. You understand what I mean.

(3.) The propagation and preservation of the human race being the chief end of matrimony, it is plainly evident that an intentional and premeditated frustration of this end is totally illicit and very sinful. And yet in this regard the gravest sins are committed by married people. They wish to be married people, but not parents; they make use of their rights, but in such a way that no one can call them father or mother. Married people who do such things commit almost as grievous a sin as parents who take away the life of their children. What wonder, then, that in the Old Law God punished a man who had been guilty of this vice with sudden death.—*Gen.* 38: 9, 10. Reflect well on this, Christian husbands, and for God's sake guard against this sin which would cause your eternal damnation. Do not be afraid that the number of your children will become too great; leave all that in the hands of God. No matter how many children he may bless you with, you must accept them from his hand and bear the burden of rearing and educating them in the love and fear of God; the duty of your state of life requires this. Be not afraid; he who feeds the birds of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field is rich and powerful enough to provide for your children all that they need for their support. And what a consolation it will be for you in eternity, if you have had many children and educated them all for heaven!

(r.) Since matrimony is a holy sacrament instituted by Christ, you must look upon it as something sacred and *not be guilty of anything contrary to the holiness of the nuptial state.* Be modest and pious in your conversation and intercourse with your wives; even when alone with them, say and do nothing contrary to holy modesty; never look upon them otherwise than with respect and veneration, for you know that their bodies, as well as yours, are members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in you.—*I. Cor.* 6: 15—19. Beware of giving scandal to your children or to other people: do not allow your children to sleep with you in the same bed, that they may see and hear nothing that might be a great scandal to them. Believe me, when I say that the saddest examples of such scandals are of too frequent occurrence.

(</.) Finally, you are most strictly bound to *conjugalfidelity*. In the Old Law, under which matrimony was not a sacrament, God forbade the unfaithfulness of married people, or adultery, under

the penalty of death. "If any man commit adultery with the wife of another, and defile his neighbor's wife, let them be put to death, both the adulterer and the adulteress."—*Levit.* 20: 10 Adultery was an abominable vice, a capital crime, even in the eyes of the Gentiles. The emperor Aurelian so much detested this vice that he ordered a soldier who was taken in the act of adultery to be tied to the branches of two trees and torn in two. The ancient pagan Saxons caused an adulteress to be strangled and burned, and a gibbet to be erected for the adulterer over her ashes. After this you need not wonder that the Catholic Church detests adultery as a most abominable crime and, as formerly, inflicts severe punishments upon those who commit it. Any one who had committed this crime had to do austere penance for seven years and more before he could receive absolution and be received again into the communion of the Church. Adultery being one of the most grievous sins, it obviously excludes from heaven all those who are guilty of it, therefore, the Apostle says: "Do not err: adulterers shall not possess the kingdom of God." —*Z. Cor.* 6: 9, 10. Consider this, Christian husbands, and shun adultery more than death. If your conscience should reproach you in this regard, make a sicere confession and do penance, that you may rescue your soul from eternal perdition.

2. *A patient love.* Your wives are not saints, they have various failings and faults, oftentimes great faults. But having once married them you must have patience with them. "Charity," as the Apostle says, "is patient, is kind, beareth all things, endureth all things."—*1. Cor.* 13: 4, 7. But, alas, there are husbands who grievously sin in this respect. How cruel, how uncharitable and rude is often their conduct towards their wives! For weeks at a time they never give them a friendly look or word; if something unpleasant happens to them when they are away from home, their poor wives have to bear the penalty, and their rude and savage nature sometimes goes so far that like wild beasts they fall upon them, and give them blows and kicks, so that the neighbors must come to the rescue. St. Ambrose says: It were better that the earth should open and swallow up such husbands. Yes, and I say, that such mean, cowardly husbands, who are not ashamed to thresh their poor, weak wives, as if they were their slaves, ought to be drowned in the depths of the sea. But I imagine I hear some say, "Father, it is easy for you to speak, you do not know what a bad woman is like. It requires the patience of Job to get along with such wives as ours are. They are the personification of self-will; they would sooner have the world come to an end than yield; they scold the whole day, and make a great disturbance for the most trifling thing. They are full of vanity, want to follow the fashions, dislike to work, carry

whatever comes into their hands out of the house, contract debts, and are even given to intemperance." If things be as you say, you are indeed not to be envied, for Solomon, who very likely spoke from experience, says: "It is better to sit in the corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman." But listen to a brief story. Socrates, a pagan philosopher, had a wife named Xantippe, who had become notorious and a byword to every one. One day, without any reason or provocation, she commenced to scold and find fault; there was no nickname that she did not bestow upon her husband. Socrates remained silent as usual, and to put a stop to the scene, went away. As he was passing out of the door below, the wicked woman poured a vessel of dirty water upon him. What did the philisopher do? did he get excited, curse and swear? No, indeed; with the greatest composure he looked up at her and said: "I thought that after such a thunder-storm we should have a shower." Should not this example of a pagan move you to bear patiently and indulgently with the faults of your wives? Do you not know that it is a Christian duty to bear wrongs patiently, and to forgive those who offend you? I do not, however, require of you to be always silent and to endure; you have a right to correct your wives in a proper way, if they are very bad. But in such extreme cases you should model your conduct according to that of surgeons who cut and burn, not out of hatred, but only with the intention of healing the sick. Not blind rage, hatred or revenge, but love must be your guide, when you proceed with severity towards your wives. If, however, their faults are insignificant and they commit them not from malice, but more through human weakness or ignorance, have patience with them and do not forget that you too have faults and offend in many ways. "The Lord direct your hearts, in the charity of God and the patience of Christ" (ZZ *Thess.* 3: 5), that you may be husbands according to the Christian law, which is based upon charity.

3. Finally, *a holy love.* This is the chief end of matrimony. Husband and wife must so love each other that their hearts may become always purer, their conduct better, the number of their good works greater, their zeal more active, so that they may be united in everlasting joy and happiness beyond the grave. Christian husbands, you must not only be pious yourselves and walk in the fear of God, but you must also exercise a salutary influence upon your wives so that they may serve God and secure their eternal salvation. It would, indeed, be a sad thing if, having been most intimately and closely united for years upon earth, you should be for ever separated from each other after death; if one of you should enter heaven, and the other be condemned to hell, or if you both should find your place among the damned, **there to**

curse each other for all eternity. Therefore treat your wives kindly, instruct them if you observe faults in them, correct them with patience and charity, set them a good example and pray for them; thus with the help of God you will succeed in amending their faults and imperfections.

Part II.

Duties towards children and servants.

These duties are so numerous and important that it would require whole days to explain them to you at length; but as these duties are often mentioned in sermons, I will be brief, and confine myself to that which it is absolutely necessary for you to know.

1. *I shall first speak of your duties towards your children.*

(a.) Christ says: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit."—*Matt. 7:* 16, 17. These words of Christ are applicable to you, Christian husbands. If you are pious and God-fearing, it is to be hoped that you will have pious, God-fearing children, but if you are men without the fear of God, men who are addicted to base passions there is great reason to fear that your children will be like you and walk in the ways of ungodliness. Christian fathers, should not this be a powerful incentive for you to subdue your inordinate desires and passions and to observe scrupulously the commandments of God? Should you not say to yourselves: I must endeavor to lead a virtuous life, not only on my own account, but also on account of the children with whom God will bless me; for if I were to lead a dissolute, vicious life, it might cause not only my own, but also my children's eternal damnation. Therefore, Christian fathers, I would especially entreat and exhort you to live soberly. Children to whom existence is given in a drunken or half drunken state are generally sleepy, silly and unfit for higher and spiritual things. What a responsibility for fathers, who are the cause of their children being so unfortunate!

(fi.) Be solicitous for the temporal welfare of your children. This duty is strictly incumbent upon you. Therefore you must labor diligently, you must be economical and saving in order to provide for your children the necessaries of life and to enable them to support themselves. Those fathers sin grievously who neglect their household, do their work either badly or not at all, and are

addicted to idleness, as also those who spend whole days and nights in saloons, gambling, drinking and enjoying themselves, whilst their poor wife and children are starving and shivering in the cold at home: finally, those who in consequence of their disorderly life burden their property with debts and ultimately cause their wife and children to be turned out into the street. How deplorable will be the fate of such fathers in the next world! But, thanks be to God, we have not many such in our congregations, and among you who are assembled here perhaps not one. But greater may be the number of those men and fathers who are too solicitous for the temporal welfare of their children. Some from excessive solicitude in regard to worldly affairs neglect their religious duties, as, for instance, their morning and evening prayers, mass on Sundays and holidays; they are miserly and practice no work of mercy towards the poor and needy; indeed, they sometimes go so far as to violate justice and in business transactions appropriate the go;ds of others to themselves. They do this for the love of theii children and to provide for them. But such love is evidently as foolish as it is wrong, because it incurs eternal damnation for the parent and brings no blessing to the children.

2. You must be a great deal more solicitous for the *eternal salvation* of your children than for their temporal welfare. If you cannot leave a dollar to your children, but bring them up piously and virtuously, you have fulfilled your duty as a parent. You must be particularly solicitous for the salvation of your children nowadays, when the world is so corrupt. Thirty and forty years ago it was a much easier task to bring up a child in the right way than at present, for the world has since so degene rated, and there are so many scandals and temptations that parents can never too be careful if they wish to preserve their children from ruin.

(a.) *Watch over them* and keep them away from sinful occasions, such as frivolous company and dangerous entertainments. Especially do not allow them to keep company with persons of the opposite sex, for this is dangerous for them, and among hundreds of young people who associate intimately with persons of the opposite sex, you will not be able to find two who do not offend God by grievous sins.

(Æ.) Accustom your children to *prayer* from their earliest years and see that they pray in the morning and evening, before and after meals; pray with them yourselves and make them join in the family devotions. Children who have been accustomed to say their prayers in their parent's house, will observe these pious

customs later when they are older and away from home, and they generally, even in their old age, say the prayers and practice the devotions which they learnt from their parents. If children love to pray with devotion, a great deal is gained. God will protect them, and his blessing will attend them during the years of their youth. I especially recommend you to induce them to receive frequently the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, for these are the best means of preserving innocence.

(4.) Finally, set your children *good example* at all times and in all places. Example speaks louder than words. If your children be the daily witnesses of your virtuous conduct and your fear of the Lord, they also will take pleasure in virtue and bring you honor and joy by their good behaviour.

3. Now a few words in regard to *your duties towards servants.* *Ks* long as they are in your service you have similar duties towards them as towards your childre' ; you must see that they conduct themselves in a proper manner. Do not say : I give my servants their wages ; it is not my business how they behave and live. But, Christian masters, it is your business, for you are to give an account of your servants, so long as they are in your house, and you become accessory to the sins of others if you do not remove the evil as far as is in your power. Never permit them to be guilty of cursing. When you hear them break out into curses and blasphemies during their work, correct them and say: "I cannot allow any man or woman to curse and blaspheme in my house." If you hear them indulging in sinful discourses reprove them severely and give them to understand that you will not tolerate such things. Watch over them, that they may be guilty of no immoral actions. If you should learn that they keep up a sinful relation with any one in or out of house dismiss them at once. In our days when young people are so frivolous, and many of them give themselves up to all kinds of dissipations, it is necessary, fathers of households, that you do your utmost to prevent sin and vice among your servants and to keep them in the path of virtue. Fulfil your duty with zeal in this regard; God will reward you abundantly.

Duties towards your neighbors.

Towards your neighbors, as in general towards all your fellow-men, you, as Christians, must practice two virtues especially, *justice and love.* I say: *justice,* which consists in giving and leaving to every one his lawful possessions. Be conscientious in

your dealings with your neighbors; do not take advantage of them, and cheat no one; pay your lawful debts; above all do not reduce and deprive the laborer, the artisan, and servant of his hard-earned wages, for this, according to circumstances, would be a sin crying to heaven for vengeance. I must also remind you of another thing. If you get work done on credit, or if you have an account at a store, you must conscientously pay those that trust you at stated times, either at the expiration of three months, or at the end of the year. It is wrong to keep laboring men and others waiting for years for their money, for they need it to satisfy their creditors.

Cherish a sincere love for your neighbors and fellow-men and desire their prosperity. When you see that things prosper with them more than with you, do not envy them, for envy is an abo minable vice which originates in hell and stands in direct contradiction to our holy religion, whose principal law is charity. Be content with what you possess. God distributes his graces variously; to the one he gives more, to the other less, to every one as much as is expedient and necessary for him. It matters little, however, whether you be rich or poor, your principal care should be to acquire the true and permanent goods of heaven. Is not poor Lazarus infinitely happier than Dives? Beware of discord and enmity. There is nothing worse, nothing more deplorable than for neighbors to live in discord with one another, to refuse to speak to each other, to bear hatred and enmity in the heart, to reproach one another, and to quarrel whenever they meet. Such enmities banish all peace from the heart, embitter life, which under any cireumstances is full of misery, and render the forgiveness of sin impossible; for so long as we do not forgive our neighbor, God will not forgive us. In fact, so long as we live in enmity, we cannot even say an *Our Father,* for we tell a lie as often as we say to God: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." If there should be enmity among you, give it up at once, be reconciled with your neighbor, and henceforth live in peace with him. Avoid lawsuits if possible, for they are always undesirable. Besides costing a great deal of money, sometimes ten, often a hundred times more than the object in litigation is worth, they are the cause of much disquietude and many sins, and frequently lead to enmities that never end. A compromise is generally better than a lawsuit.

PERORATION.

Christian men, husbands, fathers, I have now told you the most necessary things in regard to the duties of your state of life. Be assured that these instructions and admonitions which I

have given you proceeded from a kindly-disposed heart, for as a priest and as your pastor it is of vital importance and interest to me that you should appear before the judgment-seat of God as good husbands and fathers. Examine now how you have hitherto fulfilled the duties of your state of life and if you find that in this or that respect you have failed, perhaps made a great mistake, resolve from this day forward upon a thorough and permanent amendment. Make a good confession during this time of grace, set your conscience in order, and lay the foundation of a truly Christian life. Fear God and keep his commandments, be solicitous that your wives and children serve God and save their souls. If you do this, God will look down upon you with joy, accompany all your labors with his blessing and reward you as his faithful servants with the eternal goods of heaven. Amen.

THIRD SKETCH.

FOR MARRIED WOMEN.

The woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be fratsed.—Prov. **31. 30,**

Yesterday I gave your husbands an instruction on the duties of their state of life, and it is my earnest prayer that the discourse will not be profitless. But I place still greater hopes in you, Christian married women ; you belong to the sex which is called the devout female sex, and you have hearts susceptible of everything good. The Jubilee which we celebrate at present must also stimulate you to be spiritually renewed and to endeavor to lead a truly pious life. First of all you must make the resolution with renewed fervor to fulfil the duties of your state of life, for these are of the greatest importance and on them depends the salvation of your soul. The good mother of a household may rejoice when the hour of death draws near, for she will surely go to heaven. On the contrary, a woman who has not done her duty, and has not thoroughly amended her life will have to fear the worst, a miserable death and an unhappy eternity. Moreover, not only your own salvation, but also that of your children, depends on the scrupulous fulfilment of the duties of your state of life. Mothers exercise the greatest influence upon their children. If all mothers were good, pious and zealous for the salvation of souls, most children, if not all, would be good and pious, and from them a generation would arise which would rejoice both God and man. It is in a great measure the fault of

mothers that morality is at such a low ebb in our days, and especially among young people, for many mothers neglect to inculcate piety in their children and subordinates. I believe therefore that I shall be doing a good work by explaining to **you** the duties of your state, and I expect you to carry out my suggestions. You have, as I shall show you, duties—

I. As wives;
IL As mistresses of the house.

Part I.

The duties of wives.

As wives you owe your husbands—

I. *Obedience.* The Apostle requires this of you when he writes? "As the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things."—*Efh.y.* 24. You have bound yourselves to this obedience at the altar, for there you promised to be obedient and subject to your husbands in all that was right and just, as Eve was subject to Adam, and Sara to Abraham. You would therefore grievously sin if instead of obeying, you should domineer. But you must obey in all things just and lawful. To this description pertain—

i. *The affairs of the married state.* If in regard to these affairs you refuse obedience to your husbands without reason, it would be a *mortal sin.* You may quietly remonstrate with him, but if he insists upon his demand, you must obey. Only in case of sickness or for some other important reason you would not be bound to comply with his desire. That obedience in matrimonial affairs may not be sinful, it must be rendered in the right manner. In order to enlighten you somewhat in this regard, I will make use of a similitude after the manner of St. Francis of Sales.

(a.) It is not sinful to eat and to drink, because it is necessary, for without eating and drinking man could not live. Thus it is also lawful to obey the husband, because without this obedience the human race could not be preserved and propagated upon earth.

(3.) To feel some gratification in eating and drinking is not a sin, because this pleasure or gratification is necessarily connected with the use of food and drink; but to eat and drink merely **for** the gratification is sinful, according to the words of the **Lord**:

"The lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it."—*Gen.* 4: 7. Thus the obedience of the wife to the husband is not sinful, if this obedience be not corrected with a certain lust; but merely to obey in order to enjoy the act would be a venial sin at least. Christian wives, in this respect you should be like Sara, the pious wife of young Tobias, who says of herself: "A husband I consented to take, with thy fear, not with my lust."—*Tob.* 3:18.

(r.) To eat and drink too often is a sign of sensuality, is unhealthy, and shortens life, therefore we read: "By surfeiting many have perished, but he that is temperate shall prolong life."—*Ecclus. 37*: 34. The same may be said in regard to matrimonial affairs. A too frequent use of these things is, if not very sinful, at least inordinate; it is also certain that the health is weakened and injured and life shortened more or less. You should consider this, Christian wives, and keep within limits so far as it can be done with the consent of your husbands.

(d.} To eat and drink in an improper place is not becoming, and might even be very sinful. If you were to take a piece of meat and begin to eat it during mass it certainly would be wrong and would give scandal. The same is true in regard to matters pertaining to the married state. If obedience were rendered in the wrong place, great scandal could be given. I must here remind you that you must not leave your children when they are over three years cf age in your bedroom, but make them sleep in some other room. Consider that children have eyes and ears, that they may be awake when you think them asleep, and therefore might see or hear something that would be very pernicious to them.

(«.) There is one thing of which I must yet remind you. There are persons who wish to be married people, but not to be parents, who make use of their rights, but in such a manner that they need not bear the burden of children. Such married people act very sinfully, almost as wickedly as if they were to kill a child. That such grievous sins are committed is more the fault of the wives than of the husbands. They are afraid that they will not be able to feed their children and provide for them. But will God, who clothes the lilies of the field, end feeds the birds of the air, leave your children without food and raiment? In one thing only be solicitous, that your children receive a good Christian education and learn some trade; then you may rest assured that they will be able to gain their livelihood. The hardships and dangers which the married state brings in its train must not be the reason why you should not wish to become mothers. Every

state of life has its troubles, and the Apostle says of married people that they shall have tribulations.—Z. *Cor.* 7: 28. If, therefore, married women refuse to bear the hardships incident to their state of life, they should not have married. As regards dangers, they must consider that soldiers, physicians and priests must also expose themselves to dangers. The dangers mothers apprehend are oftentimes more imaginary than real. Do your duty, trust in God and pray, and all things will turn out well.

2. *The affairs of the household.* The husband is master of the house; his orders must be obeyed; all those under him, the wife not excepted, must obey him. The wife has a right to defend her opinion and to give her reasons, but if the husband does not agree with her, but insists upon his own will, she must yield to him and obey. The words of the Lord spoken to Eve must be a law to her: "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee."—*Gen.* 3: 16. Only in case the husband should order or command something manifestly detrimental to the household, or even sinful, she could and should resist with determination and refuse obedience. Christian wives, I wish to caution you against three faults which occur very frequently and have evil consequences.

(a.) *Against self-will.* Some women are very self-willed. Everything must go just as they like. If the husband resists them and does not act in accordance with their will, they begin to scold and scream, so that they can be heard several blocks off, or they hang down their heads, pout and refuse to speak a word the whole day, or, like wayward children, cry, if they cannot have their own way. Such self-willed wives cause much mischief; they give scandal to their children, and frequently drive their husbands into saloons and make them drunkards; they likewise banish God's blessing from the house, for God loves peace, and remains with his blessing only where there is peace. Away, then, Christian wives, with all self-will and positiveness, and do not forget that God has not created you to rule, but to obey.

(ά.) *Against laziness.* The words of the Lord: " In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat thy bread," apply to the wife as well as to the husband. It is indeed true that it is the strict duty of the husband to provide the necessary support for his wife and children, but the wife must not on that account be idle. Both husband and wife must do what is in his or her province. Labor outside the house is the business of the husband; the care of the household and the prudent administration of it are especially the duties of the wife. She is, as it were, the minister of the interior; it is her duty to attend to the household affairs, to govern the domes-

tics and to maintain order. But there are women who neglect their duties and will not hear of a laborious, active life. They hardly move a hand, they are too delicate to work. They cannot and will not take care of the children, they are unfit for everything that is required of a good housewife, and seem only to have married in order to play the lady. But I err; they are always occupied, but with what? With the tongue; if things do not go according to their will, they scold the husband, the children and the servants. They are occupied. With what? With finery; they spend more time before the mirror arranging their hair and clothes, than before the confessional examining their conscience. They occupy themselves in making and receiving visits, thereby spending many hours in idleness. Christian wives, be not like a picture-frame which hangs on the wall immovable, but imitate a good clock which works from the beginning to the end of the year, which always ticks and never rests.

II. *Love.* The Christian religion imposes it upon us as a duty to love our neighbor. Still more is it the duty of married people to love each other, as they are most intimately united with each other and, as Christ says, are one flesh. You must, therefore, love your husbands, but this love must be marked by two qualities especially. It must be—

i. *Holy.* Your love towards your husband may have a natural motive, that is, it may be based upon corporal and spiritual advantages, yet it must not be confined to them, but have the salvation of the husband for its chief end. Good, pious wives have great influence over their husbands, and frequently succeed in correcting their faults and inducing them to lead a good life. Clovis, king of France, was a pagan when he married the pious Christian Clotilda. She had little hope of his ever embracing the Christian faith, for he was of a savage nature and devoted to his idols with his whole heart. Hence he resisted the efforts of the priests who endeavored to convert him to Christianity. But what they could not obtain through their exertions, his virtuous consort accomplished through her beautiful example. He was the daily witness of her heavenly patience, her perfect obedience and her angelic conduct. This by degrees softened his heart and caused him to love a religion which makes its adherents pious and virtuous. A certain woman had a husband who led a very unchristian life. When all her admonitions and entreaties were of no avail she made the heroic vow to fast on bread and water until he had amended his life. She conquered him. After seven years she obtained for him the grace of conversion; he became so pious that he received holy communion several times a week. Take an example from these pious women,

Christian wives, and be solicitous for the salvation of your husbands. If you behave lovingly to them, give them a good example and fervently pray for them, you may hope, that if not immediately, at least by and by, they will avoid their faults and thoroughly amend their life.

2. *Patient.* St. Monica, St. Augustine's mother, gives you a beautiful example in this regard. Her husband Patrick was, as St. Augustine himself relates, of a very vehement and irritable disposition. But she never resisted him, not even in words, and only when she saw him calm and quiet again did she explain to him why she had done this or that about which he was excited. When other women complained of the violent acts of their husbands she said to them: Blame your tongues for that and look at your marriage contract in which you promised to be subject to your husband. And when they who knew what an irritable, excitable husband she had, wondered that she never complained of him, she told them how she treated him, and all those who adopted her plan thanked her for it; for peace returned to the house. Do as did St. Monica, treat your husbands in a friendly and kind manner, and bear their faults with patience. Patience conquers everything; by patience and indulgence you will gain the hearts of your husbands and live in peace with them. Above all, make it your rule never to upbraid them in harsh language when they come home drunk, for that would be pouring oil on the fire; you would only increase the evil and so enrage them that they might abuse and maltreat you. Wait until the next day, or for a favorable opportunity, when their excitement is over and they are more inclined to heed your salutary lessons.

III. *Fidelity.* This is a most strict duty for wives as well as for husbands. In the Old Testament, when matrimony was not as yet a sacrament, but only a natural contract, the violation of conjugal fidelity, or adultery, was punished with death. He who was convicted of adultery, man or woman, was led to the gates of the city and there stoned to death. Thus, you know, the chaste Susanna would have been stoned to death, had not Daniel made known her innocence. Terrible too was the punishment of a woman against whose conjugal fidelity her husband had any suspicion; he brought her before the priest and offered a sacrifice for her. The priest then took some holy water, put some dust into it and then pronounced terrible curses upon the wife, in case she should be guilty of adultery. After that ceremony she was forced to drink the cursed water. If she was innocent the water did not hurt her, but if she was guilty she was afflicted with the most dreadful pain and sufferings.—*Numbers* 5: 13-31. I shall not, however, say more on this subject.

Part II.

1. *The duties of mistresses of the house.*

Being mothers, you have duties—

1. *Towards your children.* You certainly wish that your children should become good Catholics and go to heaven. But that your wish may be fulfilled depends in a great measure upon yourselves.

(æ.) You know the adage, "As the tree, so the fruit." Children, as a general rule, in regard to the body, resemble their parents; they have the same features and hair; even in gait, voice and manner of speaking they are frequently like them. The same is the case in a moral point of view, as history and experience prove. The descendants of pious Seth remained pious for centuries, whilst the descendants of Cain, without exception, were wicked as their progenitor. Of almost all the saints we read that they had good, pious, honest parents. To produce but one example. St. John the Baptist's parents were Zachary and Elizabeth, w'ho "were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame."—*Lzike* 1: 6. Thus to this very day we see that good parents generally have good children. There are exceptions, but not many. But above all, everything good may be expected of children who have a pious, virtuous, good mother. As the child rests nine months under the heart of its mother, its existence and life are most intimately united with the existence and life of its mother; hence it is easy to comprehend how much influence the moral conduct of mothers has upon their children during the time of pregnancy. If mothers are during that time, and of course before and after it, really modest, pious, meek, etc., it may be reasonably expected that their children will become good like the mother; but if they are full of vanity and a desire to please, extravagant, bold, quarrelsome, envious and peevish, if is much to be feared that their children will be like them. Christian mothers, you must at all times, but especially during the period of pregnancy, bridle your passions and be really pious, for two reasons, for your own and your children's sake.

(ά.) Of your other duties to your children I need not speak at length, because they are often spoken of in public discourses. I will, however, allude to them in a few words:

Speak to your children at an early age about God and his perfections, especially his omnipresence, his omniscience, his holiness;

infuse into their hearts a filial fear of God, and a hatred of sin, as did the pious queen Blanche, who often told her son Louis, whom she loved most tenderly, that she would rather see him dead than guilty of a mortal sin. Encourage them in their tender age to pray; pray with them yourselves, but do not make them pray too much at a time, lest they lose all pleasure and joy in prayer.

Correct their bad manners and faults in time. Do not say: The child does not know any better; when it becomes older it will lay aside its faults of itself. No, no, such will never be the case; the fault will grow with the child and become a passion, a habit, which can only be eradicated with great difficulty.

Watch over yozcr children in and out of the house. Children are by nature inclined to evil, and are easily corrupted; how necessary it is therefore for you to keep a watchful eye over them. Watch them particularly when at play and in the bed-room, that you may prevent everything sinful.

Do not allow them to associate with corrupt children or adults, and keep them away from places where they see and hear improper things Do not permit them to associate with persons of the opposite sex, for this is exceedingly dangerous. Among a hundred young lovers who often meet each other alone I do not hesitate to say that scarcely two avoid improprieties. Mothers who allow their sons and daughters to keep company, or even encourage them, become accessory to numerous sins, and great will be their responsibility before God.

If you are so situated that your children have to live out, *seek places for them in Catholic hozcses, where religious dzities are attended to,* and request their employer to watch over them and see that they conduct themselves properly.

See that when they are old enough they *freqziently during the year, say once a month, go to confession and communion.* Sons and daughters who often receive the sacraments usually remain good, or easily return to the path of virtue if they have strayed from it.

Set them a good example. If they see in you only what is good they will be good and will follow you. Good example is the best teacher of virtue; without it the most salutary lessons and instructions profit nothing.

Finally, pray for them every day, and recommend them to the protection of Jesus, Mary and the holy angels, that they may grow up in the fear of God and serve him all the days of their life.

Christian mothers, be most solicitous for the education of your children. Educate them for G-od and heaven; this is the best and most meritorious work that you can practice, a work which will bring you consolation in life and death, and for which you will be eternally rewarded. It is scarcely possible that a mother who brings up her children properly will be lost; while, on the other hand, it is scarcely possible that a mother who is careless in this respect will be saved.

2. *Towards your servants.* So longas they are with you, you have duties in regard to them similar to those in regard to your children. Give them fair wages, do not overload them with work, treat them kindly and see that they conduct themselves properly. If you observe them to be guilty of any faults, correct them, and on no account permit them to indulge in improper conversation. Should they commence to keep company with each other in your house dismiss them from your service without ceremony; otherwise you would be accountable for all the sins they might commit in your house. Prevail upon them to fulfil their duties, to assist at the family devotions, to go to mass on Sundays and holidays and frequently during the year to go to confession and communion. I know that in our days many servants are very corrupt and despise all salutary admonitions, but do not lose courage on that account; do only what you can; God requires no more.

3. *Finally, towards your neighbors.* Towards them you must conduct yourselves like nuns. Like them you must—

(a.) Remain within the *enclosure,* that is, love to stay at home. Women who are often in other houses are not worth much; not to mention that they more or less neglect their domestic affairs, cause a great deal of trouble to their husbands, and give a bad example to those of their household, they bring on themselves much that is unpleasant, caused by their inconsiderate talking, and besides this they are the occasion of many sins. A Christian wife and mother should prefer to be at home.

(3.) *Wear a veil,* that is, do not look much at others, or care for things which do not concern you. You have enough to do in looking after your family, and seeing that everything goes on properly so that you may one day give a good account to God; why then should you trouble yourselves about those with whom you have nothing to do?

(i) *Observe silence.* To love to talk, and to talk much, is natural to many females, especially to the older ones; it is, as it were,

their hereditary sin. It is a pity that they ire not allowed to mount the pulpit and to preach. Some of them would be able to say more in one minute than we men in two. When two or three women come together it takes some time before they can separate, every one knows something, and, of course, something new and very important, the real or imaginary faults of their neighbor being the usual topic of conversation. In such a manner fraternal charity is violated and occasion is given to dissensions, for when those whose faults are spoken of hear it, they are offended and frequently for years nurture anger and aversion in their heart. Think seriously over this, and do not give too much liberty to your tongues; speak thoughtfully, and rather too little than too much. Especially make it your rule never to speak of the faults of others which are not known, unless your duty obliges you. A good remedy to be prudent in speaking, and to keep within the proper bounds, is to consider frequently the words of Christ: 'T say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment."—*Matt. 12:* 36.

PERORATION.

Now I think I have told you all that you have to do in order to fulfil the duties of your state of life. Receive this instruction humbly and regulate your life accordingly. If your conscience tells you that in one or the other point you have not done your duty, ask pardon of God and promise to amend. If you should have grievously sinned against your duties do not despond, only make a good confession, redouble your zeal for the duties which you have to perform as wives and mothers; then God will be gracious and merciful to you, for he wills not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. From henceforth be pious, God-fearing wives and mothers, and you will do a great deal of good in the midst of your families, and become a blessing tc V/hole communities; you will be able to live in peace and die with consolation, for you may hope to be numbered among the pious women in heaven. Amen.

FOURTH SKETCH.

FOR YOUNG MEN.

Remember ihy Creator in the days of thy youth . . . before the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say: They please me not.—Eccltes. 12: 1.

Young men, your fathers and mothers were assembled here during the past days to be instructed in the duties of their state of life. Now it is your turn to receive instruction in regard to your duties and I will proceed to impart it. Youth is an important time; it is the spring-time of life, and as the whole year generally resembles the spring, so the old age of a man resembles his youth. If in your young days you walk in the fear of God there is reason to hope that you will live piously and virtuously in your old age; but if you lead a bad life there is every reason to fear that in your mature and declining age you will also lead a life estranged from God. There is a proverb which says: "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it."—*Prov.* 22: 6. If you serve God with fervor in your youth, you lay the best foundation for your temporal prosperity and happiness, and may hope with confidence that you will be saved. In order that you may discharge the duties of your state of life I will show you what you have—

I. To avoid;
II. To do.

Part I.

What must you avoid in order not to sin against the duties of your state of life? I answer, you must avoid—

I. *Imfurity.* There is no sin more abominable and odious to God and man than impurity; he who commits it degrades himself to the level of senseless beasts, and is made like to them.—*Ps.* 48: 21. St. Bernard very appropriately says: "If aman yield to pride, it is a man that sins, but he sins like an angel; if he succumb to avarice, it is a man that sins, but he sins like a man; but if he give himself up to the impure lusts of the flesh, he sins like a beast." What a degradation to man when by the vice of impurity he makes himself like to the beasts and deserves to be called one!" He that is addicted to this vice experiences no joy or pleasure in anything good; praying, going to church, hear-

ing the word of God, confession and communion, etc., are distasteful to him; he either omits them altogether or performs them in a perfunctory manner; he loses the respect and esteem of all good people, frequently brings upon himself poverty and need, and eternal damnation hereafter, for "fornicators, adulterers and the effeminate shall not possess the kingdom of God" (Z *Cor.* 6:9, 10); "they shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone."—*Apoc.* 21:8. But you must know that you can grievously sin against chastity in various ways.

1. AVhen you voluntarily entertain unchaste thoughts and representations in your heart and take pleasure in them, you commit a mortal sin. It is a still more grievous sin, if you voluntarily entertain impure desires, if, for instance, you have the desire to see, hear or do something unchaste, if the opportunity presented itself. Theologians say that as regards impurity there is no such thing as a *venial* sin, but whatever offends against it is a *mortal* sin, if done with a perfectly free will. Consequently, if one frequently and voluntarily entertain in one's heart sinful thoughts and desires, one accumulates sin upon sin. What a responsibility then, before God, since even one of these sins deserves hell! Consider this, and therefore banish all impure thoughts and desires from your mind with the greatest determination directly you notice them.

2. More sinful than impure thoughts and desires are immodest words. Such discourses manifest a corrupt heart. Even men who are deeply sunk in the vice of impurity have a horror of such discourses and avoid them. It is not to be doubted that people who carry on such filthy discourses on every occasion are punished more terribly in hell than those who commit impurity in act. Such impure discourses are almost always the cause of scandal, because by them others are also corrupted. "Woe to him through whom the scandal cometh." How terrible should the sin of unchaste discourses appear to us, for the tongue on which Jesus is received in holy communion is defiled by such filthy language.

3. Grievously sinful too are unchaste touches, whether on one's own or on another's body. He who touches himself immodestly and does it knowingly and with a wicked intention, commits a mortal sin. He who shamelessly touches persons of the opposite sex, either from forwardness, or jest, or embraces and kisses them with an impure intention, is guilty of a mortal sin and is so much the more culpable before God because he also incites the other person to sin.

4. There is another sin of impurity, which is very different from unchaste touches, and is called in the Sacred Scriptures

effeminacy, but generally, self-abuse or self-pollution, and of which those render themselves guilty who commit impurity with themselves. There is something very sad about this sin, more especially because it readily becomes a habit so deeply rooted that it costs a superhuman effort and the greatest violence to overcome it. Oh, guard against this detestable and pernicious sin, and if unfortunately you should be guilty of it, make a good confession during this time of grace; the confessor will deal with you kindly, and if you have a good will, and employ the means prescribed by him, with the help of God you will be delivered from your misery and rescue your sr»ul from eternal damnation.

5. I shall mention yet another sin against chastity; it is that sin -which in Holy Writ is called *fornication* and is committed when two unmarried persons of the male and female sex carnally sin with each other. Those who commit this sin act abominably before God and their holy guardian angels and incur eternal damnation, for "fornicators shall not possess the kingdom of God" (7. *Cor.* 6: 10) ; " no fornicator, nor unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ."

This is the first thing which you have to avoid– impurity in thought, word and deed. It is hardly an exaggeration when spiritual writers say that more than half of the human family who are lost are damned on account of impurity. O Christian men, may none of you belong to the number of those who are condemned to the abyss of hell on account of impurity. Live chastely and avoid whatever is in the least contrary to holy chastity. If you have sinned against this virtue, henceforth sin no more, cleanse your conscience by a good confession and bring forth fruits worthy of penance.

II. *Courtship.* This is only permissible when it is with the knowledge and consent of pious parents and with a view to marriage in due course. The young people should seldom meet and never alone, but always in the presence of their parents or some trustworthy person. Moreover, the young couple must resolve to conduct themselves properly in every respect. But I ask where among single persons will you find such? Certainly not two among a hundred. Let us suppose that two young persons who keep company have no sinful intention in the beginning, and will not allow themselves to be guilty of anything sinful; will their intercourse continue without sin? This is much to be doubted, for it often happens that the love between a man and a woman begins in the spirit and ends in the flesh. Jacob, surnamed the Penitent, who in the sixth century had lived in the desert for forty years in the greatest austerity and holiness, and who had been highly favored by God with various gifts of

grace, entertained for some time, without any sinful intention, friendly feelings towards a certain woman. What was the result? Very soon sinful thoughts and desires arose in his heart, which became more violent day by day, and finally, brought him so far that he committed a grievous sin against chastity with that person. Now, if a man of such tried virtue and so advanced in life fell so low, how can it be expected that young people who are so weak in virtue and so prone to evil will avoid sin? With most of those who keep company there is generally, even in the beginning, a wrong intention, for they keep company only for the sake of gratifying the lusts of the flesh. There are but few who whilst associating with persons of the opposite sex do not sin; on the contrary, most of them commit a multitude of sins in thought, word and deed and plunge themselves into temporal and eternal perdition. Therefore, refrain from intimate acquaintance that you may not offend God and lose your immortal souls. If there should be any one among you who sins in the way I have indicated, he must necessarily give up the acquaintance, otherwise no priest can absolve him and he would remain excluded from the grace of the Jubilee.

III. *Cursing and swearing.* This is a universal sin; at home and abroad, in cities and in villages, everywhere people curse and swear, and sometimes so terribly as well nigh to chill the blood in one's veins. Perhaps there are also among you many who are addicted to cursing and swearing. Do you know that he who curses and swears commits a mortal sin and is guilty of eternal damnation? But what Increases the enormity of this sin especially is the scandal with which it is generally connected; for the reason that cursing and swearing is so wide-spread is because it is learnt from others; of one's self no one would curse and swear. Therefore, guard against it. If heretofore you have been addicted to this vice, endeavor to overcome it. Consider what a great responsibility you treasure up against the day of judgment, for if we have to give an account of every idle word, what will be done to him whose mouth overflowed with curses, imprecations and blasphemies? And how will you render an account of the scandals which you give thereby? If for every curse, oath, imprecation or blasphemy you were punished by a fine of ten cents, I feel assured you would soon lay aside this wicked habit. Now, as often as you curse and swear give ten cents to the poor, and in a very short time you will curse and swear no longer.

IV. *Intemperance in drinking.* He who drinks till he is drunk lowers himself below the level of the beasts; for this reason we say he is beastly drunk, although this expression is wrong, for

no beast drinks more than is necessary to quench its thirst. But what is still more to be considered is the fact that there is no vice which is harder to be uprooted than drunkenness. Many sinners are converted when they become old, but the drunkard is hardly ever converted; he *drinks* till he sinks into the grave. Hence the saying: "An impure man is converted *rarely*, a drunkard never." A zealous priest, grown old and gray in the care of souls, says that during his long life in the priesthood he converted only one drunkard, and him only for the short space of six months. Young men, do not begin this bad habit which will make you miserable for time and eternity. Avoid the company of persons addicted to the vice of drunkenness. Be sober and watchful, never forgetting that drunkards shall not possess the tingdom of God.—*I. Cor.* 6: io.

Part II.

If you wish to be truly good young men, you must—

i. *Pray.* Without baptism no one can be saved, as Christ himself teaches: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—*John* 3: 5. Now, as necessary as baptism is to all men for salvation, so necessary is prayer to those who have arrived at the years of discretion, if they wish to work out their salvation. He who prays may hope one day to reach heaven, but he who does not pray will surely be damned. "Just as necessary as moisture is to the plants that they may not wither and die, so necessary is prayer to us that we may be saved."—*St. Chrysostom.*

Therefore pray—

(a.) *In the morning,* before you go to work. You should say a good morning prayer for these reasons. First, in order to thank God, for it is he who has graciously preserved you during the night from every misfortune and from death, which might have overtaken you during a quiet sleep. Should you not thank him for his watchful care? How grateful is the sick man who after many sleepless nights once more enjoys a peaceful sleep? Thanks be to God, he says, I have slept well once more during the past night. Secondly, in order to ask his grace and protection for the coming day, each of which has its own perils; you may meet with a misfortune, you may become sick and die, in fact, even a greater calamity might befall you; you might commit a mortal sin, die in it and go to hell. Should you not then pray to God to protect your body and soul and give you the grace to spend

the day for his honor and the salvation of your soul? Thirdly, in order to make a good intention. You know that what is not done for the love of God and for his glory, has no value in his eyes and is without merit for heaven. Should you not then make a good intention in the morning and have the firm resolution to perform all your actions during the day for the glory of God? Never omit your morning prayers. You need not pray long. It is sufficient if you spend five minutes at your morning prayers. But, be they short or long, say them with attention; and besides the general resolution not to offend God by any sin, make the special resolution to avoid this or that fault, to practice this or that virtue.

(3.) *Before and after meals.* A certain man was invited to a wedding at which many respectable young guests were present. Before he sat down to table he silently said his grace. One of the guests sneeringly said to him: "I suppose all say grace with you at home?" "No," replied the man, "I have two hogs in my stye; they do not say grace when they are fed." Greatly abashed the young man remained silent. Christian men, do not imitate those who are ashamed to say grace before and after meals. He that is ashamed to say it, ought to be ashamed to eat. Pray before and after meals, but pray with devotion that God may be pleased with your prayer and bless your food and drink.

(cl) In the evening. You have the same reason for saying your night prayers that you have for your morning prayers. You must thank God for all the benefits which he has bestowed upon you in body and soul, you must ask him to protect you during the night and to avert from you everything injurious to body and soul, you must offer him your labor and all the good you have done in union with the merits of Jesus Christ, that he may reward you for it in heaven. Never lie down to rest without a short but devout prayer. Examine your conscience as to how you have spent the day, repent of the faults you have committed, and promise God to avoid them in future.

2. *Assist at mass on Sundays and holidays.*

(a.) On these days every Catholic is strictly obliged to assist devoutly at mass. He who without a sufficient cause neglects this duty, commits a mortal sin. In former times *he Church severely punished those who were negligent in hearing mass. The Council of Elvira ordained that all who neglect to hear mass on three successive Sundays and holidays be excluded from the Church and looked upon as infidels. In France the rules were so strict in the seventh century that if a person neglected mass

only twice a year without sufficient cause he was deprived of Christian burial. Church history tells us that the Christians during the time of persecution assisted at the sacrifice of the mass under the greatest difficulties and dangers, and that many of them suffered martyrdom in consequence of the fulfilment of this duty. Consider this, and be zealous in hearing mass on Sundays and holidays, but hear it with *devotion.* I say, with *devotion,* for the mass is the holiest action, because Jesus Christ offers himself by the hands of the priest in an unbloody manner for the salvation of the world, as he offered himself on the cross in a bloody manner. Beware of talking, laughing and gazing about, and of otherwise misbehaving, that you may not be so unfortunate as to carry home with you a curse instead of a blessing. Do not leave the church until the priest leaves the altar.

(3.) You must not only hear mass, but also the *sermon.* The Church imposes it as a strict duty on all pastors to instruct the people in the doctrines and truths of our holy religion on Sundays and holidays.—*Cone. Trid. Sess. V. de reform. c. 2.* From this it evidently follows that the Church requires the faithful to hear the word of God. I do not say that you are as strictly bound to hear a sermon as to hear mass on Sundays and holidays, neither do I say that you commit a grievous sin as often as you neglect to hear a sermon; but this much is certain, that those who for weeks and months do not listen to the word of God from pure negligence or contempt, cannot be held guiltless of a grievous sin, especially if they do not possess the necessary knowledge in matters of faith and morals. Do not content yourself with only hearing mass on Sundays and holidays, listen attentively to the word of God *t* nd endeavor to regulate your life accordingly. I may also remark here that you should assist in the afternoon at Vespers and Benediction. The afternoon is a part of the Sunday and of the holiday as well as the forenoon, and ought to be sanctified. You, therefore, do wrong if instead of visiting the Church you seek pleasures, and spend the whole afternoon without prayer.

3. *Often during the year go to confession and communion.* Our divine Saviour has conferred on us one of the greatest graces in the institution of the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist. As you all know and believe, in the Sacrament of Penance, if received with due preparation, all sins, even the greatest and most grievous, are remitted, together with the eternal punishment. God re-admits us to his love and grace and gives us the assurance that if we persevere in penance we shall attain eternal salvation. Moreover, in the Sacrament of Penance we receive special graces which enable us to overcome every

temptation and to preserve ourselves from a relapse into sin. But still greater graces are imparted to us in the holy Sacrament of the altar. There we receive not only graces, but the Author and Dispenser of all graces, our Lord and God. He enters into our heart, unites himself most intimately with us and makes us partakers of his divine nature. Hence St. Bernard says: "The highest degree of love is that which induced our Saviour to give himself to us as food; for in all other cases and by all other benefits, as, for instance, through the Incarnation, Christ became only *like to us,* whereas in this Sacrament man becomes *like to God.* For as the food and he that eats it become one, so he who receives Christ worthily is by his ardent love totally transformed into him and made conformable to God." All the effects which healthy nourishment produces in the body, holy communion produces in the soul, provided it be received worthily. As bread preserves our natural life, nourishes our body, and strengthens us to perform our daily labor, so this heavenly manna preserves our supernatural life, which is sanctifying grace; it strengthens us also in our struggle against the enemies of our salvation, gives us strength to practice every virtue, inflames our heart with the fire of divine love and is the pledge of eternal life. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath life everlasting: and I will raise him up in the last day."—*John* 6; 55. What a happiness then for you that you have the opportunity of becoming so often sharers in the many graces of confession and holy communion! But many of you do not know how to appreciate this good fortune, you let month after month, even a whole year pass without approaching the sacraments; many would not receive the holy sacraments even at Easter were it not a strict law of the Church. This is really not a good sign and produces anything but good results. He who confesses and communicates so seldom shows plainly that he is lukewarm and cares little for his salvation, and when young people are hardly seen at the communion rails once or twice during the year there is much reason to fear that they are leading a sinful life, that they are associating with persons of the opposite sex and living unchastely. Neglect of the holy sacraments is also one of the principal reasons of a relapse into sin, for the longer we abstain from approaching these fountains of grace, the weaker we become, the more we lose the fear of God, and the more the spirit of the world and lukewarmness take possession of us: God too withdraws his grace, and thus it comes to pass that we relapse into our former sins and our last state becomes worse than the first.

I must, therefore, urge you earnestly not to defer your confession and communion too long and not to content yourselves with receiving these holy sacraments only once during the year;

I certainly do not ask too much of you when I exhort you to go to confession and communion every three months, that is, at least four times during the year. Ah, we always sin, if not mortally, at least venially; we are weak and surrounded by many dangers; why should we not avail ourselves of such effectual means as confession and communion, in order to cleanse ourselves more and more from our faults, to fortify ourselves in our weakness and to obtain strength to overcome the enemies of our salvation? A good death, a happy eternity is of the greatest importance; why should we be negligent in the reception of the holy sacraments, which are to us the surest pledge of a good death and of a happy eternity!

PERORATION.

I have now explained to you what you are to do and to avoid in order to fulfil the duties of your state of life. Above all, avoid the abominable vice of impurity; think, speak and do nothing contrary to holy purity. Avoid whatever may lead to impurity, such as intimate association with persons of the opposite sex, places and pleasures which are in themselves a proximate occasion for impurity. Guard against cursing, swearing, drunkenness, gambling, unseasonable hours, quarreling and fighting. On the contrary, be fervent in good, diligently practice prayer, sanctify the Sundays and holidays by assisting at mass in the forenoon, and at Vespers, etc., in the afternoon, and go to confession and communion frequently during the year. Especially endeavor to receive the holy sacraments worthily during this time of grace. Make a good, sincere confession, reveal whatever you have on your conscience; you need not fear that the confessor will treat you severely: no, the more sincerely you accuse yourselves of your sins, though they should be most grievous ones, the more considerate he will be towards you, because your candor and sincerity will give him reason to hope that you earnestly desire to be reconciled to God, to do penance and to amend. Oh, how happy you will be if you become reconciled to God by a good confession; you will receive all the other graces which the Jubilee offers, and lay the surest foundation for a pious life, a good death and a happy eternity. Amen.

FIFTH SKETCH.

FOR YOUNG WOMEN.

O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men.— Wisd. 4:1.

In the parish church of our Lady at Finten, a village in the diocese of Mayence, there is a picture representing St. Joseph, at whose feet kneels a maiden in country attire. This maiden, called Agnes, was a simple peasant girl, but pious and chaste as an angel. Men were not wanting who sought to rob her of her innocence, but heaven watched over her and permitted no evil to befall her. One day a wicked shepherd met her in a solitary place in the country and attacked her. But Agnes successfully resisted him. Enraged at his defeat he stabbed her dead. In the course of time he confessed his crime and made known the heroism of this chaste maiden. The body of this martyr of chastity is buried in the parish church, and the memory of her virtuous example continues to live, and without doubt will live for generations to come. Oh, that you too, Christian maidens, who have assembled here in such great numbers to hear the instructions on the duties of your state of life, would value and preserve holy purity as did this chaste country girl. There is no virtue more beautiful, more glorious and more necessary for you, than undefiled purity. *O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal; because it is known both with God and with men.* If you preserve this virtue uncontaminated, by doing what is required for its preservation, heaven and earth will look upon you with pleasure, you will be what you should be—honorable, virtuous women, and the crown of glory will one day rest upon your heads. I shall speak to you to-day of chastity, and explain to you—

I. In what it consists;
II. How excellent it is;
III. What is required for its preservation.

Part I.

Chastity consists—

1. *In a chaste body.* Our body is a temple of the Holy Ghost, a sanctuary of God; it has been sanctified with the soul in bap-

tism, and Jesus Christ unites himself most intimately with it in holy communion: therefore, every Christian should highly respect his body. Chastity does not permit any one to do anything that he would not dare to do in the presence of an honorable person. Reflect, Christian maidens, whether you have been guilty of anything that offends against purity.

2. *In guarding the senses.* A chaste person allows the *eyes* no bold, wanton looks. You must, therefore, look at nothing that is improper. We are not allowed to look over-curiously at persons of the other sex, for the eyes are thieves which rob the soul unawares of purity. For this reason the saints and all pious Christians were very careful and mortified in their looks. St. Peter of Alcantara kept such a guard upon his eyes, that he did not know his fellow-religious by sight, he could only distinguish them from one another by their voice. When St. Clare looked up one day in church in order to see the sacred host at the elevation, she by chance saw the face of the priest, whereat she became greatly alarmed. Oh, that you could all assure yourselves of having been always equally as reserved with your eyes, and of never having permitted yourselves to look at anything unchaste. Those who are chaste have *pure ears.* They shun those places where the conversation is improper, that, their ears may not be contaminated. When they hear immodest discourses they are displeased and make known their displeasure by word and deed. If, therefore, you would laugh at immodest discourses and jests and find pleasure in them, you would be anything but chaste Chaste persons have *pure tongues.* They are never guilty of an unbecoming jest, or song, or even an ambiguous word; as their heart is pure no impure word proceeds from their mouth. Females who utter unchaste words and indulge in unchaste discourses show that they have a corrupt heart and are disposed to all that is wicked.

3. *In modest behavior.* The chaste woman is retired and modest in features, gestures, gait, garments, in fact, in her whole conduct. When *I* see females whose dress is characterized by vanity and shamelessness, who allow themselves bold looks, and motions of the body, who in general conduct themselves in a frivolous manner, what can I think but that they are not of the number of the chaste?

4. *Finally, and above all, in a pure soul.* A chaste person is guilty of no impure thought, no unchaste representation; permits no indecent objects, stories and actions against decency to engage her attention, subdues all impure desires and never takes pleasure in impure imaginations and dreams. If unchaste thoughts,

representations and desires arise in her heart, she turns from them with disgust, fights against and suppresses them. As she values and loves chastity above all things, she is always solicitous for its preservation. She reads no improper books, looks at no indecent pictures, shuns every kind of familiarity with persons of the opposite sex, takes no part in frivolous dances and immodest theatricals; in a word, she carefully shuns all that could entice her to impurity.

Herein consists the chastity which you should possess and practice. From this you will understand how much is required in order to be able to say in truth: I am chaste. No matter in what respect you have sinned against chastity, make a good, sincere confession. By such a confession you cannot, it is true, recover original purity, for chastity once lost is lost for ever, and can never be recovered, not even with tears of blood, but you can again obtain this priceless virtue, and if you then preserve it and are never again guilty of anything contrary to it, God will give you a place in heaven among the holy penitents. In order to urge you to the careful preservation ot chastity I will now say a few words on the *excellence* of this virtue.

Part II.

i. There is hardly a virtue which the Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church praise so highly as chastity especially virginal chastity.

(a.) We read in Ecclesiasticus that nothing earthly, however glorious and estimable, can be compared to holy purity. His words are: "No price is worthy of a continent soul."—*Ecclus.* 26: 20. And the author of the Book of Wisdom, in the words already quoted, full of admiration, exclaims: *O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men. When it ispresent, they imitate it', and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself, and it triumpheth crownedfor ever, winning the reward of undefled conflicts.— Wisd.* 4: i, 2. Christ himself called those blessed who have a clean heart: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." He especially distinguished pure, virginal souls, he chose for his forerunner a man eminent for his chastity, he selected for his Mother the ever immaculate Virgin, and for his foster-father St. Joseph, who preserved unspotted the lily of virginal purity all his life; he favored St. John with his special love on account of his virginal innocence, and revealed to him mysteries which he did not reveal to any of the other Apostles.

(A What shall I say of the holy Fathers? They are inexhaustible in their praise of holy purity. St. Cyprian says: "Chastity is the loveliest flower in the garden of the Church, it is an ornament of beauty, the loveliness of grace, and the essential characteristic of Christian grace. By it the glorious fertility of the Church flourishes and the greater the number of virgins, the more the joy of this prolific mother increases." St. Cyril says: "What a glorious virtue is chastity! It is an angelic crown, a perfection more than human." The Fathers especially say that it is chastity which renders souls still in the body like the angels in heaven. St. Basil exclaims: "Truly those who lead a chaste life are angels in the flesh; not angels of the lowest degree, but the most distinguished and noble. The angels are free from the bonds of the body and preserve their purity in heaven without having to fear the least from their surroundings, or from their nature, being confirmed in glory with the highest king; but those who lead a chaste life have to fight on earth with the allurements of the devil, to guard against the motions of the flesh by a special effort and maintain before the eyes of their Creator an angelic purity." St. Cyprian does not hesitate to place pure, virginal souls in a certain sense above the angels, saying: "Virginity places them by the side of the angels, but if we rightly consider it, their virginal dignity excels the angels, for the former fight against the flesh and gain the victory even against nature, which is not the case with the angels." In a similar sense St. Bernard expresses himself: "There is indeed a difference between an angel and a man, but only in happiness, not in virtue. The angel's chastity is more fortunate, because he has nothing to fear for it, but that of man is more glorious."

2. Christian maidens, do not wonder that the Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church speak in such glowing terms of this virtue and extol it so highly, for it is really the greatest and most glorious ornament of man, adorning and sanctifying both *body* and *soul.*

(a.) As the body pleases man, when it is becomingly dressed, infinitely more pleasing is it to God and his holy angels when adorned by chastity undefiled. In fact, what can be a greater honor to our body than to be by continency drawn, as it were, from among the lower class of animals and translated to the higher class of spiritual beings? In such a manner that is even now effected in some measure which will be perfectly accomplished at the resurrection of the flesh; the animal body will be transformed into a spiritual one. Hence St. Cyprian says to virgins: "What we shall one day be, you have already commenced to be; you begin even in this world to obtain the glory of the resurrection."

(Z1) Chastity also sanctifies the *soul,* for it draws us heavenward, kindles in us the fire of divine love, encourages us and enables us to practice every virtue. Tell me, is it not chaste souls who despise the world with its vanities and lusts and earnestly aspire to heavenly things? Do they not find greater pleasure in prayer and the exercises of piety than the children of the world in their earthly enjoyments? Do they not distinguish themselves by humility, modesty, fidelity, obedience, temperance, and fervor in good before all their fellow-men? And is it not virginal chastity for which an exceedingly great reward is prepared in heaven? for it is said of chaste, virginal souls that they follow the Tamb withersoever he goeth; therefore they are the nearest to Jesus and are distinguished above the other saints.—*Apoc.* 14: 4. Should you not, therefore, esteem and preserve with the greatest care so excellent a virtue which sanctifies you in body and soul and makes you participate in so great a happiness in heaven?

3. Cast a glance upon the faithful servants of God in the Old and the New Testament; their example is capable of convincing you of the excellence of chastity and of inspiring you with great love for it. How highly Joseph of Egypt and Susanna valued this inestimable virtue! They preferred rather to go to prison and to death, than sin against chastity. When St. Euphrasia of Antioch had been apprehended by a soldier, and could see no way of preserving her chastity, she availed herself of heroic stratagem. "If you leave me undefiled," she said to the soldier, "I will give you a remedy which will render you invulnerable in battle." The soldier was curious and anxious to know this remedy; whereupon she produced a small phial, saying at the same time: "If you rub yourself with this liquid, all the power of your enemies cannot prevail against you." At the same time she applied a portion of the liquid to her neck, saying: "To convince you of the truth of my words, draw your sword and give me as powerful a stroke as you can." The soldier did as commanded, and the virgin's head rolled before his feet. By such heroism she preserved her virginity. The Emperor Maximilian I. was so extremely modest that he would not allow any one to help him to dress or undress, as is customary among high personages. Even on his death-bed he gave an admirable example of his modesty; when he felt his end approach he ordered a new shirt and other articles to be brought to him; he put them on himself without any assistance, and gave orders that after his death he was to be placed in his coffin in this attire.

4. What more shall I say? Even the Gentiles respected chastity very highly. I would here call your attention to the ancient pagan Romans. They erected a magnificent temple to PZr/a. the goddess of chastity, and manifested the greatest veneration for her. The Vestal virgins, who were in the service of this goddess, were required to live in the single state, purely and chastely, and were venerated by the Romans as something sacred. The privilege of walking at the right hand of the nobility and even of the Emperors was granted them, and for greater security they were accompanied by two pages with public signs of honor; if they chanced to meet a culprit on his way to the place of execution, he was at once liberated in honor of the virgin, so highly did the ancient Romans esteem chastity. Terrible was the punishment of a Vestal virgin, if she sinned against chastity. A deep hole was dug in the earth, a few feet in length and width, and this was covered with a stone, except a small space which was left open. Through this opening a ladder was let down to the bottom, where a wooden table had been placed, with a little bread and water and a lamp which would burn for about twelve hours. By means of this ladder the Vestal virgin who had violated chastity had to descend; the ladder was then drawn up, the little opening closed, and the whole vault covered with earth. Thus the unfortunate girl was buried alive and died in despair. Who does not shudder at such a fate? This terrible punishment indicates clearly how highly the pagans esteemed chastity. Would that you too would understand the inestimable value of holy purity, and, therefore, guard and preserve it with the greatest care! Let us, therefore, consider for a few moments *vohat is required for the preservation of this virtue.*

Part III.

In order to preserve chastity you must—

I. *Be humble.* Pride goes before a fall. When girls are vain and desirous of pleasing, when they dress and adorn themselves, think much of their form and beauty and endeavor to attract the attention of others, they are in the greatest danger of falling into the abominable vice of impurity. We need not wonder at this; chastity is exposed to many and great temptations, and every one needs great graces in order to overcome them. Certain it is, however, that only truly humble souls can hope for these graces from God, for the Apostle St. James plainly says: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."—4: 6. Girls who are vain and proud, are generally much inclined to impurity; no great temptation is needed to cause them to fall. If, therefore,

you are anxious to preserve chastity, guard against vanity and a desire to please; do not be proud of your beauty and figure, for what does it profit you to have a beautiful, well-formed body, if an ugly soul deformed by sin dwells therein? And how frail and perishable are bodily beauty and grace, and how sadly they end in the grave! Guard against vanity in regard to clothes; dress according to your station, and avoid all extravagance. When you wear better clothes on Sundays and holidays, do so not to please men, but on account of God and for his glory. Your best and most precious garments should be innocence and virtue, for with these you must one day appear before your judge, Jesus Christ, if you wish to enter heaven.

2. *Avoid sinful company and courtships.*

(a.) When ten healthy persons are around a man afflicted with a contagious disease, what will be the result? Will the ten healthy persons restore health to the sick man? No; there is more danger that the one sick man will infect them, and cause them to fall sick. The same holds good in regard to the intercourse of the good with the wicked; it is not the good that gain over the wicked, but the wicked that ruin the good; this is the rule; exceptions are of rare occurrence. Dina, the daughter of Jacob, was only once in wicked company, when she was seduced and lost her innocence. Daily experience teaches us the same. We see how so many young people are led astray by wicked company. Therefore, if virtue and innocence be dear to you, shun people who have no fear of God, who indulge in sinful discourses and conduct themselves improperly; shun houses and places where sinful things are done, and converse only with moral and virtuous persons, among whom you need fear nothing for your chastity.

(λ) Far more dangerous and fatal than bad company are courtships. Experience teaches that there are only a few who remain free from grievous sins when courting. They may not sin in the beginning, but they fall in the course of time. First, they speak from affection; in course of time this affection becomes a passion, and passion having once obtained a foothold, blinds the understanding, and causes them to be guilty of a thousand impure thoughts, words and even deeds. I do not hesitate to say that without exaggeration among a hundred courtships there is scarcely one that remains free from mortal sin. With justice, therefore, St. Jerome calls courtships the mortal struggle of dying chastity.

3. *Abstain from dances.* The holy Fathers and spiritual writers call dancing a very dangerous pleasure, and caution all most

emphatically against it. "Where there is music and dancing there is drunkenness for men, ruin for women, sadness for the angels, and joy for the devils."—37. *Ephrem.* "For whom shall I express my regret first? for the girls or for the married women who go to dances? It is there that girls lose their modesty and virginity, and married women learn to violate conjugal fidelity."—*St. Basil.* Indeed, how is it possible for dancing to be without sin? The unchaste looks and discourses, the music, the voluptous dress, the exciting drinks, the proximity of the sexes, must not all this excite the sensual emotions, and open the door to impurity? Consider this, and fly from dancing as a most dangerous enemy of your soul. If you should be strongly tempted to participate in dances, consider those serious truths which St. Francis of Sales lays to your heart in something like the following words:

(a.J Whilst you are dancing many souls are burning in hell on account of the sins which they committed whilst engaged in the same amusement, or in consequence thereof.

Many pious souls are engaged in prayer whilst you dance; how much better do they employ their time than you.

(f.) Whilst you are dancing many souls depart this life in great agony, and thousands of people suffer violent pains. Have you no compassion on them? Do you not think that you will suffer and die while others are dancing?

{di) The eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints are upon you. Oh, how much it must displease them to see you give yourself to such frivolous entertainment!

(tf.) Whilst you are dancing, death approaches and summons you into an eternity of joys or pains.
If you reflect a little on these serious truths you will not wish to dance, and you will shun a pleasure which is the cause of a multitude of sins, and perhaps of eternal damnation for so many young people.

4. *In all your temptations pray fervently, and especially honour the Blessed Virgin.*

(a.) "Watch ye, and pray," says our Lord, "that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the P.esh weak." —*Matt.* 26: 41. Man is weak and unable of his own unaided will to overcome temptations, especially if they be violent. This is particularly true of impure temptations. These temptations require not only a powerful resistance on our part, but also a great

grace on the part of God, in order to be completely overcome. But this grace is a fruit of fervent prayer, according to the words of Christ: "Ask, and it shall be given you."—*Luke* 11:9. II we turn to God with confidence in time of temptation and ask his grace, he will most certainly assist us to gain the victory. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue that you may be able to bear it."—*I. Cor.* 10: 13. Pray daily for the gift of chastity and in every temptation call upon God for help, that he may give you the victory.

(3.) Venerate also the Blessed Virgin and recommend yourselves daily to her maternal protection. She is very powerful, because she is the Mother of God; she is very good, because she is our mother, she can and will obtain for us the virtue of chastity by her intercession, because she is the chaste spouse of the Holy Ghost and most tenderly loves chaste souls. A young man, deeply sunk in the vice of impurity, dedicated himself by the advice of his confessor to the Blessed Virgin, and daily and in every temptation said this short prayer: "0 Mary, my mistress, remember that I am thine; defend me as thy property." And, behold, this youth from henceforth remained free from every relapse and lived chastely. Afterwards, with the permission of the young man, his confessor made known this story in a sermon, when many practiced this devotion and never again relapsed into the sin of impurity. So powerful is Mary's protection and intercession. Venerate her daily with great devotion and in every impure temptation invoke her with the words: "O Mary, my mistress, remember that I am thine, defend me as thy property." Surely the Blessed Virgin will assist you to overcome every temptation and preserve chastity.

5. *Finally., often receive the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.* In the Sacrament of Penance you receive not only the remission of sins, but also special graces for a pious, penitential life. At the same time, your confessor, when you open to him your heart, imparts to you the best instructions and prescribes for you the most appropriate remedies for overcoming every temptation. How often has it occurred that a person in the most imminent danger of losing her purity, but who having opportunely and sincerely confessed has had her eyes opened to the danger by her confessor, and has thus been rescued by him from the brink of the precipice. Still greater are the graces which are imparted to us in the Most Holy Sacrament of Love. In this Sacrament we receive Jesus himself, the purest and holiest, the author and dispenser of grace. This Sacrament, in a special manner, weakens impure desires and gives us extraordi-

nary power to mortify the lusts of the flesh and to livs chastely, wherefore it is called: "The corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins."—*Zach.* 9: 17. Hence all spiritual writers recommend nothing more urgently for the preservation of chastity than the frequent reception of the holy sacraments. Experience also teaches that young people, who go to confession and communion frequently, live chastely, or are easily converted again, after having fallen, whilst those who seldom receive the sacraments, perhaps only once a year, are nearly always caught in the meshes of impurity. I, therefore, repeat to-day the admonition which I have often given you in the confessional and from the pulpit: Go to confession and communion frequently. You may go any day; the opportunity is presented to you every day, but especially every Saturday and Sunday. Avail yourselves of it and make it a rule to approach the sacraments once a month. If you do this God will certainly give you the grace to spend the years of your youth virtuously and to preserve the inestimable treasure of chastity.

PERORATION.

I shall now conclude this instruction to you on the duties of your state of life. You know wherein true chastity consists, what an excellent virtue it is, and what you must do in order to preserve it. May the good God give you his grace, that you may seriously consider the truths I have brought before you; often think of them and regulate your life accordingly. Detest and shun as you would shun death all that is contrary to purity; hold fast to this thought wherever you may be: "I will be chaste, that the remembrance of it in my old age or on my death-bed may cause me no sadness and anguish, but joy and consolation." Then zealously do all that is required for the preservation of chastity. Shun vanity and the desire to please, and be humble of heart, for humility is the foundation of all virtues, but especially chastity. Have nothing to do with dissipated, frivolous people, and remember what has been said about courtships. Absent yourselves from places, societies and entertainments, which are dangerous to innocence and purity; especially avoid dancing, lead a retired life, for chastity thrives only in the shadow of solitude. There are two places where you should generally be found, and which should be dearest to you, namely, at *ho-me* and at *church.* Otten think of the vanity of all things earthly, and say to yourselves: "That which delights is but transitory, that which burns is eternal." Go frequently to confession and communion, for these sacraments strengthen you in your weakness, and enable you to overcome temptation; live chastely that you

may hereafter receive the exceedingly great reward which God has promised to chaste souls when he says: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."—*Matt.* 5: 8. Amen.

SIXTH SKETCH.

FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE JUBILEE.

THREE REFLECTIONS FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE GRACE OF THE JUBILEE.

Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life.
—*Apoc.* 2:10.

With this Sunday closes the great Jubilee, for the concluding devotion of which we are assembled. I hope and trust in God that it has been a time of grace and spiritual renovation for you, for there are but very few in our parish, who have not received the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist and performed the other good works prescribed. Many of you were not satisfied with an ordinary confession, but have made a general confession, with a view to set your conscience in order and to lay the foundation of a pious, penitential life. To-day therefore you can assist at the concluding celebration with a joyful heart. Henceforth you must be solicitous to preserve the grace of the Jubilee during your whole life. You know that heaven is promised not to those who begin well, but to those who end well. "The end crowns the work." Your state in eternity will be decided, not by the fact of your being in the grace of God now, but by what will be the case at the end of your career. You are at present in the grace and friendship of God, and if you were to die this instant you would go straight to heaven, but if you have the misfortune to fall away, your present justice will not save you: "If the just man shall turn away from his justice and shall commit iniquity, ... he shall die in his sin, and his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered."—*Ezech.* 3: 20. "He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved."* I wish, therefore, to recommend to you three reflections for the preservation of the grace of the Jubilee or for obtaining the blessed gift of perseverance:

I. The present life;
II. The future life;
III. Calvary.

Part I.

About three hundred years ago there reigned in England a queen named Elizabeth. She was at first a Catholic; at least, she pretended to be a Catholic, but as soon as she had ascended the throne she declared herself a believer in the new religion and persecuted unto death all who remained loyal to the Catholic faith. She caused more than a hundred priests to be executed and a great number of lay people. Devoid of faith, engrossed by the cares of the world and captivated by its pleasures, she used to say: "If I can rule forty years, I will cheerfully renounce heaven." Her wish was really fulfilled. She ruled forty-five years, and died. What, think you, does this queen who, it is to be feared, is burning in the flames of hell, think of the language which she made use of during life? Does she say now: I cheerfully give up heaven, and suffer the most excruciating torments of hell, because I was allowed to rule forty years upon earth? Ah, who could believe it? On the contrary, she will have numberless times cursed her blasphemous speech, together with the three hundred years she is burning in hell, and in despair will curse it for all eternity. Is it not the greatest madness for the sake of this miserable, earthly life to lose heaven and to plunge one's self into eternal damnation? I shall mention only two features of our earthly life, in order to show you how foolishly those act who do not persevere in virtue; how they violate their fidelity to God, and sin. Man's life upon earth is—

i. *Full of sufferings and hardships.* Since the fall of man the earth resembles a burying-ground with a forest of crosses. The first sound of the babe upon earth is wailing and weeping, as if it had a presentiment of much suffering in this valley of tears. And, indeed, what is this earthly life? There is, it is true, much laughing, singing, jesting, and jubilation, but there is more complaining, moaning, sobbing and weeping. And when a man is about to die he is not merry; he laments and moans, while bitter tears stream from his eyes. You are to-day assembled in this church in great numbers, perhaps as many as a thousand, but if I were to ask each one of you: Are you contented? Have you everything you wish? perhaps not one could answer my questions in the affirmative. Some are poor and do not know how to provide properly for themselves and family. Others are sickly, afflicted and troubled with many sleepless nights. Others again have much trouble with their children and subordinates, or are compelled to labor early and late all their life. Oh, how true are the words: "Great labor is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam from the day of their coming out

of their mother's womb, until the day of their burial into the mother of all."—*Ecclus.* 40: 1. God has ordained for love of man that there should be tribulations, sufferings and trials. He wishes to disgust us with this terrestrial life, and, as it were, compel us to serve him faithfully and thereby merit heaven. Why should we therefore inordinately love a life which brings with it so many sufferings? Who would attach his heart to earth, which bears so many thorns and thistles? If you are sometimes tempted to deviate from the path of virtue, to gratify a sinful passion, to commit a sin, say to yourselves: Oh how foolish I should be to offend God and commit a sin! I have nothing good in this world, and if I should break God's commandments I should be worse off in the world to come, for I should be rejected for ever by my God. This thought will surely give you strength to overcome every temptation and to remain faithful to God.

2. *Short andfleeting.* In the primitive ages of the world people attained a very advanced age; they lived to be nine hundred, and even nearly a thousand years old. Humanly speaking it would have been worth while to enjoy life, to gratify the sensual lusts and passions, and to have a good time. But what is now the life of man? Hear what the Psalmist say (89: 10): "The days of our years are threescore and ten years, but if in the strong they be fourscore years, and what is more of them is labor and sorrow." But most men never live to be seventy or eighty years of age; they die at the age of forty, fifty or sixty years, and many much younger. How short is life! How quickly forty or sixty years pass by! If those of us who are fifty and sixty years old look back upon our past life, must we not say: Ah, how fleeting is life! It is only a dream. None of us who are assembled here can reckon upon forty, fifty, or sixty years; we are no longer new-born babes. We have spent the half or two-thirds of our life, and can, therefore, live only a few years or months longer. How short is life when we deduct the years we have lived; and if we compare our life with eternity how short it appears. Compared with eternity our earthly life is a mere nothing; therefore the Psalmist says: "A thousand years in thy sight are as yesterday, which is past."—*Ps.* 89: 4. Now, I ask: Should not one glance at this life, so short and fleeting, be an incentive to serve God? Blessed Thomas More, Chancellor of England, on account of his adherence and loyalty to the Catholic Church, was cast into prison and condemned to death. To save him, his wife with her weeping children went to the prison, threw herself at his feet, praying and imploring him to obey the king and save his life. She said: ‹rWe can live happily together for many years to come; you are still in the prime of life; why plunge yourself and your family into utter ruin?" "How many years,"

asked Thomas, "could I still live?" "At least twenty years longer," replied his wife. "O foolish exchange," the Chancellor replied, "for the sake of twenty uncertain years of life upon earth should I renounce eternal life in heaven and condemn myself to everlasting torments?" This heroic champion of truth and justice resisted the temptation, and shortly after went to meet death upon the scaffold in order to merit the crown of immortality. Take this faithful servant of God for your model; if you are tempted to transgress the commandments of God and to sin, think of the shortness of life, and say to yourselves: "For the sake of the few years which I may yet live I will not be so foolish as to lose heaven and render myself miserable for all eternity." And if you sometimes find it difficult to overcome a temptation, to practice a virtue, to fulfil a duty, console and encourage yourselves with the thought: "It will not last long, my life will soon be spent, and if I courageously persevere in good, my reward will be eternal." Thus one serious look at this present miserable, short and fleeting earthly life will stimulate and strengthen you to preserve the grace of the Jubilee. A look into the future life will have the same effect.

Part II.

Beyond this world there are two eternal places, *heaven* and *hell.* Since the creation of the world many millions of people have died, and all of them have gone either to heaven or to hell. And all those who are yet to die until the end of the world will also go either to heaven or to hell. To these two places without doubt the saints frequently turned their eyes and said to themselves: If we faithfully and constantly serve God, we shall surely go to heaven, but if we are disloyal to him and give ourselves up to the world and to sin, we shall surely be rejected for all eternity. Having heaven and hell always before their eyes they lived in the love and fear of God and died a holy and happy death.

i. A frequent and earnest look towards heaven will also strengthen you to serve God with fervor. Suppose in my place there stood here before you a rich prince who possessed many thousands of dollars, and who said to you: "All those of you who will never again curse, swear, steal, commit impurity, entertain feelings of enmity, in a word, all who are resolved never again to commit a mortal sin, shall receive property to the value of half a million of dollars, and, besides, a hundred thousand dollars in cash as a donation";—I ask you, would there be even one among you who, in the prospect of a gift so magnificent, would not guard against every mortal sin with the greatest solicitude?

Would not each one say: "It is well worth doing violence to nature in order to obtain a gift so great; I shall be happy as long as I live, and not only myself but also my children and their descendants for centuries to come." But know, God makes you another promise; he says to you: "If you serve me faithfully and fervently, at least if you commit no mortal sin, I will give you heaven as a recompense." Now, I ask you, which is worth more, a property valued at half a million, together with a hundred thousand dollars, or heaven? O foolish question, as absurd as to ask: "Which is of more value, a piece of brass, or all the gold of the world? Take, for example, all the goods of the earth, all its beauty and splendor, its joys and pleasures, and compare them with heaven; they are as insignificant as a drop of water compared to the immense ocean. The goods and joys of heaven are so great that no human understanding can comprehend, no tongue describe them. All the beautiful things that are said of heaven in the Sacred Scripture, all the grand and glorious things the Fathers of the Church and spiritual writers have said, and all that priests have preached about heaven is as nothing compared with the true glory of heaven. St. Paul, who was caught up to the third heaven, that is, to the real heaven, the abode of the Blessed, and who therefore saw its glory with his own eyes, says that he there heard words which it is not granted to man to utter (ZZ *Cor.* 12: 2-4), and then filled with astonishment, exclaims: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."—*I. Cor. 2*: 9. If an angel should stand here before you and preach to you on the joys of heaven, he could not make you comprehend them, because in our human language we have no words to express adequately the joys of heaven; moreover our understanding is too weak to conceive those joys. "This glory, this beauty, this majesty, which will be our felicity," says St. Augustine, "is above all our thoughts, feelings and words; what God has prepared for his friends transcends all faith, surpasses our hope, our love, our wishes and our desires. This happiness can be acquired, but never adequately appreciated; it can be merited but not described."

I wonder no longer that the saints esteemed all earthly things so little and considered them as dung; that they served God so faithfully and labored so assiduously for him, suffered and even laid down their lives for him: one look towards heaven rendered everything easy for them; they said with the Apostle: "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."—*Rom.* 8:18. I can recommend to you nothing better than frequently to look up to heaven. When you are sorely and violently tempted think of heaven and say: Oh how foolish I should be to barter

heaven for this sin." When you find it difficult to practice a mortification or to bear a cross, think of heaven and say: "Heaven is worth any and every sacrifice." Yes, often think of heaven in order to able to overcome every temptation and to remain faithful in the service of God.

2. Faith teaches us that there is another everlasting state, which is *hell.* What shall I say of this place of torment? I can only say that it is the very reverse of heaven. Just as a man or an angel is incapable of making us comprehend the joys of heaven, so they are incapable of making us comprehend the torments of hell. Whatever there is hideous, terrible and painful upon earth; all that people have suffered from the beginning of the world and shall suffer to the end of time, is not to be compared to hell and its torments. This is foreshadowed by the figures used in the Sacred Scriptures. Hell is called a *fire.* What causes more pain than fire? What could induce you to hold your hand five minutes over a burning candle? Now, all the Fathers, especially St. Augustine, teach that all the fire of earth is like a cooling dew compared to the fire of hell. This must be evident to us when we consider that God has made the earthly fire not for our chastisement, but for our benefit, whilst he created the fire of hell only for the punishment of the rebellious angels and impenitent sinners. Who can comprehend these torments? Hell is called a *worm.* This worm signifies the remorse of conscience, the anguish, the terror and consternation of the damned. Think of the anguish, the agony, of a poor culprit on his way to the place of execution. How pale he is, how he trembles, how much more like one dead than living. Behold, this is the state of the damned in hell, not only for a few moments, hours or days, but for all eternity without any interruption. Can anything more terrible be imagined? Hell is called a *place of darkness,* where everlasting horror dwells. How uncomfortable we feel during a dark night! How rejoiced the poor sick man feels after a long winter night is past and he beholds once more the friendly light of day! How deplorable the condition of that man who has lost his sight! Consider the terrible state of the damned who languish in everlasting darkness. Hell is hell only on account of its everlasting duration. "Their fire shall never be extinguished, their worm shall never die." The damned in hell hear always only these words: *For ever* and *Never.* When in the excess of their torments they exclaim: "How long will our pains last?" the answer will resound throughout all hell: *For ever.* And when longing for redemption they exclaim: "When shall we be freed from our pain?" they will be told? *Never.* Oh! who would not be filled with terror when he thinks of this *For ever* and *Never!*

Descend, therefore, frequently in thought into hell, that you may learn what an evil sin is and henceforth avoid it. You would indeed have lost all understanding or all faith, if the comtemplation of hell and its everlasting torments would not deter you from sin. Therefore, St. Bernard exhorts us frequently during life to descend in thought into hell, that we may not be compelled to descend into it after death. I would recommend to you yet a third reflection, namely, the thought of *Calvary.*

Part III.

Nothing is more powerful to preserve **us from sin than a look** towards Calvary; for this look shows us—

i. *How guilty we render ourselves before God when we offend him by mortal sin.* God, the heavenly Father, loved his Son most dearly, he loved him infinitely more than all angels and men. Therefore, he publicly declared him to be his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. And how did he treat this Son after he had taken upon himself the sins of the world as the Lamb of God? He treated him as his worst enemy. Christ lived thirty-three years upon earth, and these thirty-three years were, so to say, an uninterrupted series of privations, tribulations and sufferings. Let us consider only his passion. We behold him in the garden of Olives in such anguish that he exclaims: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death!"—*Matt.* 26: 38. His agony is so unspeakable that he sweats drops of blood. He is apprehended and treated worse than a criminal. Herod derides him as a fool, the soldiers scourge him so inhumanly that his whole body is one wound, they put a crown of thorns upon his head and abuse him so cruelly that even Pilate has compassion on him and exclaims: *Ecce homo I* "Behold the man!"—^^19:5. Finally, thay lay the cross upon his shoulders, conduct him to Calvary and crucify him. For three hours he hangs on the cross, suffering inexpressible pains, till he bows his head and dies. Ah, what an evil must sin be when God, the heavenly Father, so cruelly chastises his Son after that Son has become security for our sins! "If," as Christ himself says, "in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?"—*Luke* 23 : 31. Oh, one glance at Calvary shows us more plainly than one look into hell how culpable before God man renders himself when he commits sin. If, therefore, you are in danger of committing a sin turn your eyes to the Crucifix and consider what Christ has suffered on account of your sins, and say to yourselves: "Ah, what would await me were I to consent to this temptation and sin, since my divine Saviour had to suffer so much for the sins of others. My God, let me die rather than sin."

2. *How ungrateful we should be to Jesus Christ, if we were to sin anew.* Basil, a notorious emperor of the East, while one day hunting, met an elk of extraordinary size; he rushed upon him and was in the act of felling him with his lance, when the elk caught him by his horns in the belt, lifted him up and was about to dash him to the ground. A nobleman close by, perceiving the emperor's peril, hastened to his rescue. Every one praised the heroic deed of the nobleman and thought that the emperor would reward him munificently. But what did he do? The ungrateful wretch, who in his pride could not endure to be indebted to any one for a benefit, ordered the nobleman to be beheaded, under the pretext that he had sought the emperor's life. What execrable ingratitude! Who would not be justly incensed at such ingratitude? But stop; far more detestable and culpable is our ingratitude towards Jesus Christ when we relapse into sin. Has not Jesus Christ done far more through love for you than did the nobleman for his sovereign? He saved only the temporal life of an emperor, but Jesus Christ has redeemed you from eternal death, from sin and eternal damnation. Again, the nobleman only risked his life for the emperor, whereas Jesus Christ really laid down his life for you on the altar of the cross. But what does he who sins? I should not dare say it if the Apostle did not—he crucifies Christ anew. He therefore renews the crime of the Jews who after numberless contumelies and insults nailed Christ to the cross, shed his precious blood and trampled it under their feet. Judge for yourselves; is not this being far more ungrateful towards Christ than was the emperor towards the nobleman? is he not guilty of an ingratitude so great that words fail to express it? Ah, how could it be possible for us to sin anew, if we would only consider the enormity of such ingratitude! Therefore, I cannot recommend to you anything more urgently, than that you frequently, especially in time of temptation and when in danger of sinning, meditate upon the bitter passion and death of Christ, and say to yourselves: ‹fNo, I will never again sin and crucify my Saviour anew."

PERORATION.

These are three reflections which I urgently recommend to you at the conclusion of our meditation to-day, in order to preserve the grace of the Jubilee so long as you live. Do not forget that our life upon earth is short and fleeting, and that before we have time to think we shall be on the brink of the grave. Should we then neglect the salvation of our soul on account of so short and wretched a life? Do not forget that a two fold eternity is before us, an unspeakably happy one in heaven, an expressibly miserable one in hell, and that we can obtain the former, and

escape the latter only by never again offending God by mortal sin. Do not let us forget that Jesus Christ in his infinite love has shed his precious blood for us. How could we be so ungrateful to him as to crucify him anew by our sins? Therefore stand fast and with unflinching determination say with the Apostle: "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulations? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?" Thus with the grace of God, for which you should pray daily, you will preserve the grace of this Jubilee to the end of your life, and the words of Christ will be fulfilled **in** you: "Be thou faithful until death, and I will **give thee the** crown of life." .Amen.

SERMON TO BE PREACHED BY THE PASTOR ON THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER A MISSION, JUBILEE, etc.

Iam the way, and the truth, and the life.—John 14:6.

"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here" *{Mark* 16: 6), said the angel of the Lord to the pious women who visited the tomb of Jesus Christ on the morning of the third day, and I am proud to be able to say the same to anxious inquirers concerning certain persons of this congregation. You seek this or that sinner who lay buried in the grave of sin for months and years; he is risen, he is not here. No, he who a few days ago was a great sinner and an abomination in the sight of God, is not here; he stands justified and sanctified before him; sorrowfully, like the publican, he struck his breast and by a candid and sincere confession spoke those healing words: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner," and the Lord, who wills not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live, restored him again to his favor and friendship. Yes, you have all, with the exception of a very few, washed your souls in the laver of penance, and nourished and strengthened them with the Bread of Angels, the Sacred Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; you are risen from the dead and have prepared a glorious feast for the angels in heaven, who rejoice over the repentance of one sinner more than over ninety-nine who need not penance. By your general participation in the holy exercises—(Forty Hours' Devotion—Mission—Jubilee) you have given evidence that you earnestly desire the salvation of your souls. It has been a great gratification to me to see so many make their peace with God and receive him in holy communion. But do not believe that everything is accomplished, that you are already saved. Ah, no; your confession and communion are only the beginning of your conversion; you must continue to work out your salvation until you draw your last breath. You are, as it were, on the sea, in the midst of a violent storm; you must row on till you have safely reached the harbor. You promised at your baptism to love G-od and

to serve him alone, you solemnly renewed this promise during these days of grace. Be faithful to your promise, be men of your word, and do not mock God by promising much and doing little or nothing. So far, but no farther! You have sinned enough in your past life; abuse the goodness and mercy of God no longer. Turn back, turn back, the Egyptians cried out in the utmost terror and confusion when the divided waters of the Red Sea closed upon them. I also cry out to you: Turn back from your evil ways, you have served the world long enough, begin now to serve God earnestly and to love him above all things. Follow no longer the world and its maxims, but Christ crucified; strive to resemble him in all things, for only he who bears a resemblance to Jesus can hope to be of the number of the elect. We generally endeavor to form our characters according to those of our temporal friends, and it is from this conformity that the union of hearts arises. There is no friendship where there is no resemblance. If, therefore, you wish to be friends of Jesus you must endeavor to resemble him, for he is—

I. The way;
II. The truth;
III. The life.

Part I.

Christ is the way. Therefore we must learn from him the way we are to go. When God saw that men were walking in forbidden ways, he decreed in his ineffable love to send his only-begotten Son into the world to show them the right path. He made known to them the path that leads to God, namely, humility, patience, mildness, meekness, love of our enemies, and all other virtues. He not only preached, but he first practiced that which afterwards he inculcated by his word. He who was rich became poor in order to teach us that it is not riches that make man happy, but poverty in spirit, and he said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." The king of heaven and earth hides his glory and majesty under the form of a poor, feeble child, and we sinners are only anxious to shine in the world. Is this the way which Jesus points out to us? He says: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart," and we are proud and haughty, our veins swell with indignation at the least appearance of insult, and our passion rises at the shadow of neglect. He says: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that persecute and calumniate you!" Now these words sound like a command, and you say: I cannot forgive such a one, he has offended me too grievously. You cannot forgive and yet you wish God to forgive you your sins. Our

Blessed Lord died for a world of enemies who nailed him to the cross, and dying-he promulgated the law of forgiveness: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." You say daily: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." Oh, practice this part of the Lord's Prayer for the future; forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Remember the words of St. James: "Judgment without mercy shall come upon those who do not show mercy." God says in the fourth commandment: Honor thy father and thy mother! But where is filial love and respect to parents? It has disappeared almost entirely from the face of the earth, and is to be found with but very few children of our days. This commandment is changed now a days, and reads: Parents, obey your children, that in your old age they may give you a morsel of bread and not permit you to starve. Is this the way Christ teaches you? Again he says: "If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee having one eye to enter into life, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire." —*Matt.* 18: 8, 9. What do these words mean? They mean this, if they mean anything at all: Avoid not only sin, but also the occasion of sin. Whatsoever is an occasion of sin to you, even if it be as dear to you as your hand, your foot or your eye, you must remove it, you must shun it, for upon this depends your salvation. Have you done all these things hitherto? Ah, no, but you have promised to do them for the future. Do not perjure yourselves. Heretofore you have trodden the path of vanity, ambition, impatience, envy, anger, hatred, revenge, in a word, the path of sin; you have followed the crowd and feared the judgment of the world more than the judgment of God, not considering that the judgment of the world is perverse, calling that good which is evil, and that evil which is good. But which will lead you to life, the doctrine of Christ, or the maxims of the world? *Iam the way,* says Christ. Youmust not regard what others do, but consider what I have done, who am the way. To go with the crowd is to wish to be damned with the crowd. Christ twice said: "Many are called, but few chosen." All are called to the heavenly banquet, but few render themselves worthy of their vocation and election; but few lead a good, virtuous life; but few practice humility, patience, mortification and self denial: but few subdue their corrupt nature and sinful inclinations and conform themselves in all things to the will of God, and yet this is the way which Jesus points out to us as the only pathway to heaven. Practice these virtues, that you may be of the small number of the elect.

Do not tell me that you cannot. You can if you will. Many who have gone before you have done it, why then cannot you? Have you fallen deeper than St. Augustine, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Mary of Egypt, St. Margaret of Cordona and many others? I can hardly believe it, and yet they rose after their fall, abandoned and renounced sin. You are made of the same material; the saints were of flesh and blood, as you are, they had the same nature, the same passions, the same wicked world to contend with, but they had a better and stronger will. What they have done, we also can do, not indeed of ourselves, but with the help of God's grace, for we can do all things in him who strengthens us.

Part II,

Our Blessed Lord says not only: ***I** am the way,* but also: ***I** am the truth,* in order to give us to understand that we must seek the truth with him, if we wish to find the way through and in him. This is so certain that even the Pharisees, though his most bitter enemies, seemed convinced of it when they said: "Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth." We need not wonder that so many Christians deviate from the right path. Without reflection, they follow the maxims of the world, which are diametrically opposed to the principles of the gospel. Love those that hate you, forgive those that offend you, despise what the world esteems, and esteem what the world despises, avoid sin and shun the occasions of sin, be faithful to God even in small things, listen to the word of God, hear the Church—these are some of the lessons of Eternal Truth. Now, tell me, are there many who regulate their conduct according to these lessons? "O shame," exclaims St. Anthony, "when the devil propounds his doctrines, they are believed and received; when the world preaches its maxims, they are believed and received; when the flesh proposes its evil suggestions, they are believed and received, but when the God of Truth delivers his doctrines, which alone are true, they are not believed and not received, except by a few; by the generality of people they are called into doubt or entirely disbelieved. The devil is believed, no matter how wicked his suggestions; the world is believed, no matter how bad its maxims; the flesh is believed, no matter how unchaste and ungodly its allurements; but eternal Truth, no matter how noble and sublime its lessons are, is disbelieved, dishonored and laughed at. The devil deludes people with promises which he never keeps, the world offers goods which are false and perishable, and the flesh allures to pleasures which end in sorrow, sadness and woe. All men, and especially Christians, are well aware of this; they have often experienced this truth,

and yet the sworn enemies of our souls are believed, and the God of Truth, whose promises are infallible, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, is not believed. Everyone and everything is believed but God and his holy word."

And this Eternal Truth, Jesus Christ, asks you to-day, as he formerly asked the stiffnecked Jews: "When I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me?" When I tell you that you must subdue your corrupt nature and sinful inclinations, why do you not believe me, but believe instead those who tell you to indulge your passions and give them free scope? What I tell you is the truth, what others tell you is falsehood. Thanks be to God, from such you have excluded yourselves during this (Mission, Jubilee, etc.), during these days of salvation; you have heard the words of Eternal Truth in a clear and forcible style, you have received them into your hearts, and with the help of God's grace and your own co-operation I hope they will bring forth fruit a hundred-fold. Once more, then, promise God that you will obey the doctrine of Christ and be guided by it all the days of your life. Remember that he who now teaches you the truth will judge you on the last day by this standard.

Part II

Iam the life. The wicked Achab met with his death, because he would not obey the prophet of God. A similar fate will befall those Christians who spurn the lessons of Eternal Truth. He who does not follow the Redeemer in truth will find darkness and death outside of him, as all those perished in the deluge who were not in the ark of Noe, for there is no other name under the sun whereby we can be saved, except the name of Jesus, who alone is the Life. He has raised us from the death of sin, and by the shedding of his Blood begotten us to a new life of grace, and this life in Christ we are bound to preserve. Oh, what misery he brings on himself who does not adhere to Christ; he loses his soul; what a deplorable loss! Reflect what it means to lose one's soul. We have only one soul, and this one soul we can lose or save but once; if we once lose it, it will be lost for ever. When David went forth to slay Goliath he put five pebbles into his sling, saying: If I miss my aim once or twice, I shall have other stones at hand. We can strike only once; if we miss our aim then, it is missed for ever, and the loss can never be repaired. If you are sick you console yourselves with the hope that you will recover your health; if you lose an eye, a hand, or a foot, you are grieved, and justly, but you find consolation in the thought that you have another eye, another hand, another foot, with which you can still perform the necessary functioni

of life. But if you lose your soul what consolation will you have? None whatever. What blindness then to take no care of that one precious soul and to lose it for a mere nothing! Look at that mother, a poor widow, she has an only daughter; that child is sick; what care, what anxiety, what agitation of mind; she is willing to sacrifice everything in order to restore her only child to health; day and night she keeps a loving watch at the bedside of her precious darling. The child dies; what grief is depicted on her countenance! She weeps and is inconsolable because she has lost her only child, the only treasure of her heart. We have but one soul. Do we take as much care of it as that mother took of her only child? How often has your soul been sick, how often has it died the death of sin; have you wept for the loss of Jesus and his grace?

We frequently weep for trifling things, but hardly ever for our sins; we have tears for everyone and everything except for our soul and our sins. Nowhere in the Bible do we read that Christ ever laughed or smiled, but we read that he wept three times, and each time for the sins of the world. The Holy of Holies wept for our sins, and we, miserable sinners that we are, will not shed a single tear for our sins, for the loss of our precious and immortal soul. The Sacred Scripture says: "The soul that sinneth shall die;" therefore, sin no more. Remember the words of Pope Innocent XI. The ambassador of some great potentate in the name of his sovereign asked for something which, consistently with his conscience, the Pontiff could not grant. The fearless head of the Church refused to grant the request, saying: "Tell your sovereign that I have but one soul; if I had two, I might sacrifice one to please him, but having only one I am not so foolish as to lose it for the sake of gaining the good will of man." Noble words, which you should deeply engrave on your mind. Young woman, if the tempter and seducer approach you to entice you to sin, tell him courageously that you have only one soul and that you will not be so foolish as to sell that soul to the devil for a sinful pleasure; say with Jesus, who is your life: Begone, tempter!

To preserve the health of the body you avoid everything that is injurious. When it is sick you call in a physician. But when your soul is sick you are quite unconcerned. Many know by experience how dangerous a certain friendship is; they would have given it up long ago if the loss of health would have been the result; but because there is danger only for the soul they continue to foster it.

My dear friends, appreciate the life of the soul, which you have recovered during these days of grace, as it deserves to be

appreciated, and since you have found it in Christ, who says, he that findeth me, findeth life, fix all your affections and thoughts on him. And if there be one among you whose soul is still estranged from God by being in a state of mortal sin, I beseech him, in the name of Jesus Christ, his Redeemer and future Judge, not to leave this church until he has promised to return like the prodigal son, and say: "Father, I have sinned." If there be one who has suffered this time of grace to pass unprofitably to himself and unacceptably to God, if there be one who has not made his peace with God, I will take him into the school of his greatest enemy, the devil, where he will learn, what perhaps he never studied before, the value of the human soul. When our dear Lord had fasted forty days and nights the tempter came and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to him, "All these will I give thee, if, falling down, thou wilt adore me."—*Matt.* 4: 9. The devil is ready to give all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them for a human soul, and thou, hardened and impenitent sinner, givest thy soul for a filthy pleasure; is it not the climax of madness to sell so great a treasure for so small a price? What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? Oh, return to the Lord, your God, whom by your manifold and grievous sins you have so often nailed to the cross, and do penance; the arms of your crucified Saviour are outstretched to receive you, to take you upon his shoulders and bring you back to the fold, and there shall be joy over your conversion before the whole heavenly hierarchy.

PERORATION.

One word more to you who have made your peace with God: watch carefully over yourselves and your soul. You have now commenced well, but only he that perseveres to the end will be saved. Keep the promises which you have made to your God; fight even unto death for justice. Christ calls that merchant wise who, seeing a precious pearl, sold all he had to purchase it. To merit the same praise do all you can to save your soul, for it is the most precious of jewels. When a ship is in danger of being wrecked the sailors cast all the merchandise overboard in order to lighten the vessel and thereby save their lives; so you must throw everything overboard which hinders you from saving your soul. Continue then, as you have begun; persevere to the end, frequent the sacraments, pray fervently, perform the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, but above all things have charity, and henceforth labor even more zealously that by good works you may make sure your calling and election. Amen.

A PRIEST'S FIRST MASS.

FIRST SKETCH.

THE DUTIES OF THE FAITHFUL TOWARDS THEIR PRIESTS.

Honor God with all thy soul: and give honor to the priests.—Ecclus 7=33-

A great, a joyful feast has caused us to assemble to-day in this church. Jesus Christ, the High-priest for ever, has again given us a priest who is now for the first time to offer the holy sacrifice to the Triune God. What a joy for the parents of this priest to have a son, whom the Lord has chosen from amongst so many thousands for his holy service and exalted to the dignity of dispenser of his mysteries. This day is indeed the happiest day of their life, and they cannot do otherwise than look up to God with a grateful heart and exclaim with the royal prophet: "Give glory to the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever."—*Ps.* 106: 1. What joy for the brothers and sisters and relations of our newly-ordained priest, some of whom have come from afar in order to assist at his first mass; they can say: "We have a brother, a cousin, who is a priest, and who, as such, possesses a power and a dignity surpassing that of the angels." You who are assembled here to-day have reason to be glad and to rejoice; for priests are the most precious gift of the grace of heaven; through them God imparts to you all the graces which you need to work out your salvation. But that the priests may impart God's graces to you and conduct you to heaven you must scrupulously fulfil your duties towards them; you must, as I shall show you to day—

I. Honor',
II. Love;
III. Obey them.

Part I.

You must honor the priests—

i. *Because they are invested with a high dignity.* Who are the priests and bishops? They are the *ambassadors of God in* the strictest term, according to the words of Christ: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you."—*John* 20: 21. It is not men that have conferred the priesthood upon them and invested them with the power of guiding souls, but God himself, as the Apostle clearly indicates when he writes: "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over whom the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops to rule the Church of God."—*Acts* 20: 28. St. Ambrose asks: "Who imparts the episcopal, as well as the priestly dignity, God or man? Without doubt you will answer, God. Man lays on the hand, but God gives the grace: tho bishop in supplication lays on the right hand, and God blesses with his almighty right hand; the bishop performs the holy ordination, but God imparts the dignity." Now, if we honor the ambassadors of an earthly king, how much more should we honor the priests, who are the ambassadors of God, the King of heaven and earth. More than this, the priests are not only *ambassadors* of God, but *representatives* of God; in discharging the duties of their holy office they act not in their own name, but in the name of Christ. If they offer the holy sacrifice, administer the holy sacraments, preach the word of God, make various ordinances for the salvation of the faithful, they do all this by the command of Jesus Christ, for it is he himself who operates in them and through them, making use of them as instruments in order to apply to men the fruits of redemption. Hence the Apostle says: "For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us."—***II*** *Cor.* 5: 20. Now, let me again ask: If a civil magistrate deserves to be honored, because he receives his power from God, how much more are priests to be honored who in all the sublime functions they perform, and in the exercise of their spiritual authority, represent the person of Christ himself? Finally, how we should respect priests when we consider the *greatness of the power* with which God has invested them. St. Chrysostom observes, "Priests have received a power such as God has given neither to angels nor archangels, for it was not to them but to the priests of the New Law that Christ said: 'Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven'."—*Matt.* 18: 18. To them alone he gave the power to forgive sin: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."—*John* 20: 23. True, the princes of this world also have power to bind, but only the body, whereas

the binding· power of the priests applies to the soul **and extends** to heaven. Whatever the priests do upon earth is ratified in heaven, for the Lord confirms the words of his servants. In consequence of this power, which extends to the body of Christ and consequently surpasses all the power of angels and men, St. Chrysostom considers that priests should be honored more than all the great ones of the earth. He says: "The priesthood is **more** exalted than royalty. Do not talk to me of purple, diadems, and costly garments: it is all a shadow, as passing as the spring flowers. If you wish to know what a distance there is between priesthood and royalty, consider the extent of the power which is given to each, and you will see that the priest occupies a more exalted throne than the king." For as far as heaven is above earth, eternity above time, God above man, so far are the prerogatives vested in priests higher than those of any earthly prince.

2. *Because the faithful of all times have honored them.* **St. Anthony**, who was eminent on account of his holiness, and to whose prayers emperors and kings recommended themselves, honored priests so highly that when he met them he fell upon his knees and would not rise till he had received their blessing. Charlemagne ordained that all civil and military officers who treated priests with contempt and stubbornness, should be deprived of their office. St. Francis of Assisi entertained such great reverence for the priesthood that he refused to be ordained, because he did not consider himself worthy. He used to say, if he were to meet an angel and a priest at one and the same time, he would salute the priest before the angel, because the power of the former was greater than that of the latter. The Emperor Basil often admonished his son Leo to honor the priests on account of their high dignity, "for," he added, "the veneration given by you to the priests redounds to God himself. For as we wish the people to honor our ministers, so the Lord God requires us to honor and respect his ministers."

3. *Because God desires that we honor them.* In the Old Law the priests were to be honored: "With all thy soul fear the Lord, and reverence his priests. Honor God with all thy soul, and give honor to the priests."—*Ecclus.* 7:31, 33. St. Paul writes: "Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honor; especially they who labor in the word and doctrine."—*I. Tim.* 5: 17. Our Blessed Lord himself wishes that his priests should be honored, and even assures us that he who despises them, despises God. "He that despiseth you, despiseth me. And he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."—*Luke* 10 : 16. Now, contempt for a priest being contempt for Christ and his heavenly Father, I leave it to yourselves to judge how great

such a crime is, and what punishment it deserves. Mary, the sister of Moses, once murmured against her brother and endeavored to render him contemptible in the eyes of the people. She was seized with a terrible leprosy and would have died in consequence thereof had not Moses prayed for her. Upon his intercession, God restored her health, but on account of her contumely she had to do penance outside the camp for seven days.

Beware, then, of despising the priests. The Lord defends them and punishes their scoffers and calumniators. God said to the priests of the Old Law: "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of my eye. For behold, I lift up my hand upon them; and they shall be a prey to those that served them."—*Zach.* 2: 8, 9. Even if priests have faults, and even great ones, you have no right to despise them; they possess the priestly dignity and prerogatives, which must be honored in the bad priests as well as in the good. Christ himself gave us an example. He was well aware of the wicked intention of his betrayer, Judas, yet he did not make it known, but treated him leniently and charitably, in order to honor in him the priestly character, as St. Ambrose observes. The emperor Constantine said: "If I should see a priest commit a fault, far from disclosing it, I would cover the erring man with my imperial mantle that the people might not take scandal, to the detriment of religion." Honor, then, the priests, and always treat them with reverence; you owe it to them, for they are the ambassadors and the representatives of God.

Part II.

You must love the priests.

i. *Why must you loue theml* Manifestly because they **are your** greatest benefactors. No one in this world confers greater benefits on you than your priests. You are indebted to your parents for your temporal life, but for your spiritual life, which is of far greater value, you are indebted to your priests who imparted to you in holy baptism the life of grace, whereby you are made children of God and heirs of heaven. It is your priests who instruct you in the most important and most necessary of all sciences, the science of salvation; they announce and explain to you in the school and in the church the duties of your religion and state of life, and show you the path you must tread in order to attain heavt.i. It is your priests who administer to you the Sacrament of Penance, in which your sins are remitted and you are reconciled with God. It is your priests who offer daily the holy sacrifice of the mass, through which the merits of the sacrifice of the cross are continually applied to your soul; it is they

who administer to you holy communion in which you receive Jesus Christ, the Author of all graces. It is your pastors who both day and night visit the sick, no matter whether they are rich or poor, or afflicted with a contagious disease, providing them with the last sacraments, consoling, comforting and strengthening them to fight the last battle and depart in peace. It is your priests who, according to the admonition of the Lord: "Lo, I have set you this day over the nations and over kingdoms, to root up and to pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build an I to plant" *(Jer.* i; io), are constantly intent upon uprooting sin and vice and planting virtue and the fear of God. Finally, it is your priests who continually offer up prayers to the throne of grace that you may work out your salvation.

Tell me, do you know any one in this world from whom you receive more benefits than from your priests? Would you not be very unfortunate if for one year only you had no priest and were deprived of the graces which they dispense to you? If then, your priests are your greatest benefactors, why should you not love them? Certainly you must have an ungrateful heart if you are not favorably disposed towards those who do you so much good, and entertain hatred and enmity towards them. I therefore beseech you with the Apostle, "to know them who labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you that you esteem them more abundantly in charity for their work's sake", —*I Thess.* 5: 12, 13.

2. *How are you to love them?* You must—

(λ.) *Live in peace with them.* Now-a-days there are many Catholics who in the proper sense of the word are enemies of the priests. They manifest their hatred on every occasion, they revile and calumniate them and, were it in their power, they would treat them no better than the Jews treated Christ, whom they crucified. If we consider the conduct of these enemies of the priests we find that as a rule they are irreligious people, who have little or no faith, who gratify their sinful lusts and live according to the perverse maxims of the world. It is not to be wondered at that people of this description hate priests, for priests as preachers of the divine word, as defenders of religion, must oppose them and condemn their unchristian maxims and efforts. But he whose heart is actuated by religious motives and the fear of God, is not an enemy to the priests; he sincerely loves them and lives in peace with them. Witness the Christians of the first centuries; they clung to their priests with all their heart and evinced the most touching love for them on all occasions, but especially during the times of persecution. History also tells us that at the time of the French Revolution, when every priest who fell into

the hands of the revolutionists was condemned to death, many Christian families concealed priests at the risk of their own lives and cheerfully went forth to meet death when they were convicted of having harboured a priest in their house. Take these good Christians for your model; live in peace with your pastors and do not forget that enmity with them is enmity with God, in whose name they work.

(3.J *Pray for them.* There is not a day on which the priests da not remember you in prayer. In the mass they daily recommend you to the protection and grace of God and to the intercession of Mary; they remember you also in their private devotions, and pray to God for your temporal and eternal welfare. Now, as the priests pray for you so frequently, is it not right that you too should pray for them according to the admonition of St. Paul: "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of God may run and may be glorified."—*IL Thess.* 3 : 1. The first Christians did this. When Peter was in prison they prayed for him without intermission, till God liberated him through the agency of an angel. Pray also for your own priest and for all priests, that God may bless their labors and recompense them temporally and eternally for all the benefits which they bestow upon you.

(£.) Cheerfully and regularly give them their dues. Our Blessed Lord says to his disciples: "The laborer is worthy of his hire" —*Luke* 10: 7; and St. Paul writes: "Know you not, that they who work in the holy place, eat the things that are of the holy place: and they that serve the altar, partake with the altar? So also the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel."—*I. Cor.* 9: 13, 14. It is, therefore, by no means simply good will or a human ordinance that requires you to contribute to the necessary support of your priests; it is a precept God himself has given. Cherish then a sincere love for your priests and manifest this love by living in peace with them, by praying for them, and by cheerfully and regularly contributing to their support.

Part HI.

You must obey the priests. The Apostle desires this when he writes: "Obey your prelates (bishops and priests), and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls, that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this is not expedient for you."— *Heb.* 13: 17. This obedience em-

i. *Matters offaith.* In order to obtain eternal salvation it is first of all necessary that you believe all that God has revealed and the Catholic Church proposes to your faith. If you do not believe every doctrine revealed by God or proposed to your faith by the Catholic Church, you are not Catholics, and nothing could save you from perdition were you to persevere in your unbelief. "He that believeth not, shall be condemned."—*Mark* 16: 16. Now, the priests announce to you the truths of our holy faith. They are commissioned to give religious instructions in school and in church to those committed to their charge. What they teach and preach is the word of God, for they only teach what the Catholic Church teaches and proposes to be believed. From this it necessarily follows that you must receive with a believing heart whatever the preachers of the divine word propose to you. You need not fear being led into error by them; for they are under the supervision and superintendence of their bishops and of the whole Church. If one of them were to broach anything the least contrary to Catholic doctrine as regards faith or morals, he would be called to account and compelled to retract. If he refused to comply with his duty he would incur the ecclesiastical punishment of suspension and excommunication. Although the priests have not the gift of personal infallibility, they nevertheless deserve full belief, because they are the assistants of the Pope and the bishops, and by their authority preach the Catholic doctrine. He that does not subject himself to them sins against the teaching Church, and to him are applicable the words of Christ: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17. Let those consider this who despise the instructions of their priest and say: "I do not believe what the priests say, I follow my own convictions and believe what I please." Such presumptuous Catholics not only sin against the priest, but against the whole Church, and are guilty of heresy if they persevere in their unbelief. Good Catholics willingly receive the teaching of their pastor, for they know that he propounds the doctrine of that Church, which is the pillar and ground of truth. To adduce only one example, witness the emperor Constantine the Great. A number of Arians handed him a paper wherein their heresy was defended, with the petition that he would impose their doctrine on the people as the true faith. He replied to them in an earnest tone: "You deceive yourselves if you think that I would give a decision in matters of faith. I have no authority in a matter of this kind, and shall never venture to give a decision or definition in regard to that which belongs to God and to his representatives on earth. I subject myself to their judgment, their utterances and decisions with filial obedience; this is also your duty." With these words he took the document and burnt it before their eyes, urging them in earnest and touching words

to obey the Church. Such should be your conduct; you should receive with a believing heart and hold fast the doctrines of the Church which the priests announce to you. As Catholics you owe this obedience to your pastors.

2. *Matters pertaining to morals.* It is the priest's duty to uproot sin and vice in the congregation and to plant and promote virtue and the fear of God. Were they to be negligent in the care of souls, they would become accessory to many sins, and the severest judgment would await them, according to the words of the Lord: "If, when I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, thou (O priest) declare it not to him, nor speak to him, that he may be converted from his wicked way and live: the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but I will require his blood at thy hand." —*Ezech.* 3: 18. Now, if it be the duty of priests to keep you from evil, and to induce you to lead a pious life, it is certainly your duty to pay attention to their admonitions and to follow their guidance. He who is stubborn and disobedient, or who contemptuously rejects the salutary teachings and admonitions of the priests, will incur the judgments of God, if not in this life, at least in the next.

PER ORATION.

In conclusion, I would earnestly recommend you on the occasion of the celebration of his first mass by this newly-ordained priest to make the resolution to conduct yourselves towards your priests as God and his Church require you to do. *Honor them,* the sacred office which they hold makes them worthy of veneration, though they may have many faults. *Love them,* for they are your greatest benefactors, providing for your souls and leading them to heaven. *Obey them* in all things pertaining to the salvation of your soul, that their labor may be crowned with the desired success. I assure you if you adhere to your priests, honor them, and do what they tell you, it will afford you great consolation on your death-bed; you will depart this life in the sweet hope of being for ever united in heaven to Jesus Christ, our High-priest. Amen.

SECOND SKETCH.

THE PRIESTS ARE THE GREATEST BENEFACTORS OF THE PEOPLE.

You are the salt of the earth. . . . You are the light of the world—
Matt. 5: 13, 14.

Good, practical Catholics take the most lively interest in the celebration of a first mass; for they behold in every newly-ordained priest a new and precious gift of God, for which we should be so much the more grateful, as the benefits which are thereby conferred on mankind are very great and numerous.Those congregations who have no priests, and have to journey many days, under the greatest dificulties and at great expense, if they wish to perform their religious duties, know what a treasure good priests are, and what thanksgiving is due to God for them. Oh, how do such forsaken Catholics sigh for spiritual fathers to instruct them and their children in Christian doctrine and to administer to them the sacraments; many are the tears that flow and the fervent acts of thanksgiving that ascend to heaven, when a priest is sent to them to baptize their children, hear their confessions, give them holy communion, offer the sacrifice of the mass in their midst and administer the sacraments to the sick. How fortunate you are in having priests who employ the powers received from Jesus Christ for the salvation of your souls, and with whom you can find consolation and help in all your spiritual necessities and concerns. In order to bring vividly before your mind to-day the great truth that priests are the greatest benefactors of the people, I will prove to you that they are—

I The salt of the earth;
IL The light of the world.

Part L

When our Blessed Lord designates his Apostles, and with them the priests of all times, *the salt of the earth,* he indicates that their labor in a spiritual sense bears a resemblance to salt. Salt has a three fold effect:

i. *It cleanses,* for by its caustic power it dissolves and removes filth. In this respect the priests resemble salt,/<?r *they cleanse the peoplefrom the filth of sin.* They do this—

(λ .) *As preachers of the word of God.* Imagine a man who is deeply plunged in sin and vice, and who gratifies Xis unbridled con-

cupiscence and passion upon every occasion. Sometimes a good thought arises in him which brings him to a knowledge of his unfortunate condition, but he pays no attention to this salutary thought and perseveres in evil. The good example of pious Christians is before him like a beacon light, but it is too weak to move him to amendment. His conscience callsand admonishes him, but he does not heed the warning voice. In the course of time this voice becomes weaker and weaker, until finally it is lulled to sleep. But the word of God, like a heavy stone, falls upon the sinner and crushes the rock of his heart. The priest preaches, as God inspires him; now he fills the sinner with a salutary fear in bringing before his eyes his approaching unhappy death, and pointing out to him the severe judgment which awaits him; then he promises him heaven with its unspeakable and eternal joys, if he be truly converted; again he terrifies him by representing to him the wrath of God which rests upon the impenitent sinner, or he encourages him by directing his attention to the infinite mercy of God, which rejects no sinner. He unceasingly cries out to him: Do penance; be reconciled to God, make restitution of goods unjustly possessed, give up your dissipations and excesses, shun sinful company, or you will be lost for ever. These and similar exhortations often have the desired effect; the sinner enters into himself, breaks the fetters of sin and begins to lead a good life. The history of all times contains many examples of this salutary effect of the word of God. David had grievously sinned against the fifth and sixth commandments. Nathan admnistered to him an earnest rebuke, and behold, David comes to the knowledge of his sins, repents of them and does penance all the days of his life. The Ninivites were so deeply sunk in sin and vice that God decreed their destruction, but upon the preaching of Jonas they were at once converted and did penance in sackcloth and ashes. Peter preached on the day of Pentecost to the Jews, and immediately three thousand of them were converted and became Christians. A few examples only of later times. Father Avila, in a sermon on the forgiveness of injuries, made so deep an impression upon his hearers, that those who had lived at enmity with one another sought one another even during the sermon, and amidst copious tears mutually shook hands in reconciliation. Wonderful too were the effects of the sermons of John of Capistran. People were moved to tears; nothing was heard but moaning and sighing; the most obdurate sinners were converted and numerous heretics embraced the true faith. The Hussites in Bohemia used to say that they were more afraid of this monk than of a well-equipped army. See how priests by preaching the word of God cleanse the people from the foulness of sin.

(3.) *As dispensers of the sacraments. We* possess, as you know, two sacraments which cleanse the soul from sin, viz., baptism and penance. We were all conceived and born in original sin. Had we died in this sin we would have been for ever excluded from heaven, for nothing defiled can enter heaven. But behold, only a few days after our birth we were brought to the church, where the priest administered baptism to us, which sacrament cleanses us from original sin, sanctifies us and makes us children of God and heirs of heaven. How great the grace conferred on us by the priest even in the first hours of our life! But most of us have not preserved this inestimable grace of holy baptism. I venture to assert that among adult Christians very few can be found who have not offended God by a grievous sin. Now Jesus Christ, mindful of our human frailty, has instituted another sacrament by which Christians who have forfeited their baptismal grace and innocence can still be saved, namely the Sacrament of Penance. No matter how often and how grievously you may have sinned, in this sacrament you can obtain forgivenness of your sins and rescue your soul from perdition. But who is it that in the Sacrament of Penance imparts to you the forgiveness of your sins? Again it is the priests, for to them it is said: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."—*John* 20: 23. St. Chrysostom observes: "Priestshave received a power such as God has given neither to angels nor archangels, for it was not to them but to the priests of the New Law that Christ said: 'Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven'." True, the rulers of the earth have power to bind, but only the body, whereas the binding power of the priests applies to the soul and extends to heaven. Whatever they do upon earth is ratified in heaven, for the Lord confirms the judgment of his servants.

Thus the priests are the salt of the earth, for they cleanse the people from the leprosy of sin, reconcile them to God and enable them to enter heaven. Oh, how thankful you should be to God for having given you priests and invested them with such great power for your salvation.

2. *It preservesfrom corruption.* Meat that is salted is preserved from putrefaction for a long time and remains fresh and good. Herein also the priests resemble salt, for by means of the grace which God has deposited in their hands, they preserve men from moral corruption, *i. e.,* sin.

(λ.) **An excellent means of preservation against sin is the** *word sf God* **which the priests continually preach. A house, though**

very well built, needs repairs in the course of time; the fire, though it burns brightly, will be extinguished if no fuel be added, and a man who is healthy and strong will become weak and die, if he take no nourishment. Recognize in these similitudes the necessity and salutary effects of the word of God. Let there coma a time when no priest preaches the word of God, a time when for years the people hear no sermon, receive no Christian instruction, and you will see how many pious, fervent Christians will become lukewarm, forget God and the salvation of their soul, neglect their duties and lead a life of sin. Yes, man is naturally prone to evil in many ways; it is necessary that he be deterred from evil and stimulated and encouraged to good. The priests do this by preaching the word of God. They vividly describe the miserable condition of him who commits mortal sin; how he loses that most precious of all gifts, sanctifying grace, and with it all the merits of his former good works; how he closes heaven against himself and exposes himself to the greatest danger of being eternally damned; they show him how peaceful and contented he is even in this world, and what great felicity awaits him hereafter if he perseveringly walks in the path of virtue; they make known to him the means which he must employ in order to overcome temptation and to persevere to the end in the service of God. Thus they succeed, with the help of divine grace, in causing many Christians who listen to their discourses to preserve themselves from injustice and sin. With justice therefore **St.** Thomas of Villanova says: "Inestimable is the advantage which the word of God works in the soul, for it deters from sin, vivifies, enlightens, inflames, cleanses, nourishes, strengthens, heals, fructifies and softens the heart, and renders it susceptible of everything good."

(5.) A still more powerful means of preservation from sin the priests offer to the faithful *in the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.* In the Sacrament of Penance we receive not only the remission of our sins, but also special graces to lead a pious life. By these graces chiefly we are enlightened so that we may know the dangers to salvation that surround us on all sides and happily escape them; through them we receive courage and strength to combat and control our bad inclinations and passions successfully, to eradicate sinful habits, to break the fetters that bind us to the world and its vanities and to preserve ourselves from every relapse. God also frequently imparts great consolation and heavenly joy to those who confess with a contrite heart, filling them with his love in such a manner, that they lead a penitential life with a joyful heart and edify others by their fervor in virtue. But far greater and more replete with grace is the Blessed Eucharist. It is by this Sacrament that we are cleansed

from venial sins and preserved from mortal sins.—*Cone. Trid. Sess. 13, cap. 2.* Evil inclinations are the principal source or mortal and venial sins. Now, it is holy communion that weakens the evil inclinations, thereby hindering sin. Again, it is communion that strengthens us and enables us to overcome temptation and to preserve ourselves from sin. Finally, communion kindles in our hearts the fire of divine love, infuses heavenly thoughts into us and increases our zeal for virtue, thus rendering us inaccessible to the allurements of sin. Even Voltaire, the patriarch of infidelity, was so convinced of this truth that he exclaimed: "We have received God; God is in our flesh and blood; who can still commit a sin, or even conceive the thought of it?" Experience too gives testimony to this effect of holy communion. Who are those who carefully avoid every sin and distinguish themselves from their fellow Christians by virtue and the fear of God? It is those who frequently and with a heart well prepared approach the table of the Lord. The bread of angels which they eat strengthens them against temptation, elevates their minds to things above, kindles in their hearts the fire of divine love and enables them to preserve themselves pure and uncontaminated in the midst of a corrupt and godless world. Oh, if you all would frequently and with a heart always well prepared approach holy communion, you would certainly never have the misfortune to fall into mortal sin and lose the grace of God. Therefore, even in this sense the priests are the salt of the earth, because they preserve us from the corruption of sin by preaching to us the word of God, and administering to us the holy sacraments.

3. *It renders food savory and palatable.* The best viands are unpalatable unless they are seasoned with salt. In this respect also the priests can be compared to salt, for by the sacrifice of the mass which they offer daily, and by their prayers they greatly promote the virtue and piety of the faithful and render them acceptable to God. The sacrifice of the mass is indeed the most salutary and acceptable sacrifice to God, because in it his only-begotten, well-beloved Son offers himself to him by the hands of the priest, in order to give him that honor and homage which are due to him as the Lord of heaven and earth. "By no other sacrifice is God more honored than by the sacrifice of the mass which our Saviour has left in his Church to show to his Heavenly Father an honor perfectly worthy of him." *St. Laur. Justin.* "The mass is the sun of spiritual exercises, the abyss of divine mercy, the fountain of divine love, the heart of devotion, the soul of piety and the most precious means for obtaining graces."— *St. Francis de Sales.* Now, the priests daily offer this great, this infinitely precious sacrifice of the mass for all men, and in offering it they

are the peacemakers and mediators between God and man; though a priest may be most unworthy, it does not lessen the value of the holy sacrifice whereby the faithful obtain all spiritual goods and graces. But it is not by the sacrifice of the mass alone that priests draw down the mercy and grace of God upon the faithful; they do it also by *their prayers.* Priests are men of prayer; not to speak of all the other exercises of devotion which they make use of, I will only mention the Divine office which by command of the Church is daily recited by them. This prayer is not a private devotion which priests perform for their own benefit alone; on the contrary, it is a universal prayer for all the faithful, a prayer always powerful and effectual for them, because it receives its power and efficacy from the Church. This prayer pierces the clouds and ascends to the throne of grace: for in it Jesus hears the voice of his Church whom he has chosen for his spouse and sanctified by his blood; and for the sake of this prayer he gives grace and conversion to sinners, the grace of sincere repentance to the converted, good counsel to the doubtful, consolation to the afflicted, patience and resignation to the suffering, succor to the dying, and mitigation and release to the poor souls in purgatory.

Thus then the priests are the salt of the earth, purifying men from the corruption of sin by preserving them from a relapse and by drawing down God's grace and favor upon them and making them an acceptable people to him. Judge now for yourselves whether the priests, as the salt of the earth, are not the greatest benefactors of men. They are also the *light of the world.*

Part II.

Our Blessed Lord also calls his disciples and their successors *the light of the world.* "*You are the light of the world.*" This they are in reality, for in their work they resemble the light.

i. *Light drives away darkness and diffuses brightness all around.* The priests do this in a spiritual sense. Let us cast a glance at the Apostles. They had scarcely gone forth at the command of their Master to preach the gospel when the darkness of paganism fled before them, the temples of idols were demolished, and altars erected on which the spotless sacrifice was offered to the only true, living God; the abominations of idolatry were abolished and the virtues of Christianity began to shine in transcendent brightness. The priests continued to carry this light of faith into all countriess, and to this day carry it to pagan and savage nations; wherever they appear with this light the darkness of idolatry

vanishes and in its stead is planted the Christian religion with its graces and blessings.

What the Apostles and their successors have done at all times, what the missionaries still do to-day in far distant countries, the priests do in every congregation in which they labor as pastors of souls. For is it not they who without interruption, from the beginning of the year to the end of it, teach the truths of our holy religion, telling us what we are to believe and to do in order to please God and be saved? Is it not they who watch and are solicitous to have our holy faith always preserved pure and undefiled, who oppose the existing errors against faith and morals and with determination advocate the cause of justice and truth? What would happen if it should come to pass that you were without priests? Ah, nothing else than what occurred in other countries that were robbed of their priests. The light of faith would be extinguished sooner or later and the darkness of error and unbelief would again cover the earth. Oh, recognize what gratitude you owe God for giving you priests, who not only kindle but also preserve the light of faith among you.

2. *Light spreads its rays to all in the house, to each one for his work.* So the priests. They give light to all in their congregation, to each one, for the fulfilling of all that his state of life and the particular circumstances of his position impose upon him as a duty. They are a light to children and adults, to single and married, to servants, masters and mistresses, to the high and to the low, to the rich and to the poor. As soon as children arrive at the use of reason, the priests endeavor to kindle the light of faith in their hearts; they instruct them in the truths of religion and plant obedience and the fear of God in their tender hearts. To adults they disclose the dangers of the world, make them know and shun the snares of Satan, instruct them in all the mysteries of religion, and do all they can to assist them to fulfil conscientiously their duties. They have a particular solicitude for the young; they exhort them without ceasing to value and love innocence and purity, to shun evil occasions and bad company, to lead a retired life, to pray diligently, and to have God always before their eyes. The priests instruct married people in their important duties, show them the most effectual means of educating their children in the love and fear of God, endeavour to settle disputes among them and to induce them to live in peace with one another. They impress upon servants that they are bound to do their work with diligence, that for the love of God they must obey their masters and bear patiently the hardships of their state of life; to masters they preach kindness towards their servants, and admonish them to maintain discipline and order among them. They exhort the

lowly to be contented with their condition and to obey their superiors; they warn those in authority to respect the rights of their inferiors and to be kind and affable to them. In the poor the priests take a particular interest, and alleviate their wants in many ways; they admonish them, however, to preserve patience in their poverty, not to envy the rich, but to place their hopes in the eternal goods of heaven, which they will surely obtain if they serve God faithfully and fervently in that state in which he has placed them. They endeavor to convince the rich of the necessity and advantage of charity, and caution them not to attach their hearts to the goods of the world, lest their souls suffer loss. Thus the priests observe the needs of all, and are a lamp of truth and virtue for every man.

3. *Light bringsjoy and consolation to those on whom it shines.* What joy the wanderer feels who, having lost his way on a dark night, beholds the first rays of day beginning to illumine his way! He rejoices, for in the light of day he can regain his path. How much easier the sick man feels, when after having counted the slowly creeping hours of night, the first rays of the breaking day penetrate through the windows of his room. Behold, thus the priests console the hearts of men. For to whom do Catholics have recourse more frequently than to the priests in order to obtain from them consolation, advice and help? To them they tell their needs, to them they disclose their secret woes, which they cannot and will not reveal to any other; it is the priests that cheer up their despondent hearts, inspiring them with courage, patience and resignation to the will of God in bearing their cross. Imagine a sinner who has often and grievously offended God; his misery touches him deeply; filled with anguish he thinks of death and eternity; his conscience is aroused; he has no rest, no peace; what a truly wonderful change takes place when he makes a sincere confession to a priest and receives absolution! He now feels as if a great weight were removed from his heart; all sadness, all fear and anguish have disappeared like the mist before the rays of the sun; he feels now as he never felt before; he rejoices at his peace of soul, which he would not exchange for all the treasures of the earth. Thus we read in the life of the penitent Margaret of Cortona that after her conversion when she had made a general confession and interiorly received the assurance that her sins were forgiven, she experienced such a consolation, such a joy as almost caused her death. If we cast a glance at a poor sick man, who, deserted and disconsolate, sees nothing before him but death and an endless eternity, ah, how miserable such a man feels—how he longs and sighs for consolation and help! Who is it that comforts and consoles this sick man in his misery? It is the priest, who by the administration of the sacra-

ments reconciles him to God and restores to him peace of heart, who shows him Jesus Christ, the crucified Redeemer, who admonishes him to offer up to him his pains and abandonment, and who, provided he bear his sickness in the spirit of penance, gives him a consoling insight into the other world, and says to hi fl with the Apostle: "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."—*II. Cor.* 4:17. Thus the priest pours the balm of consolation into the heart of the sick and the dying, and is the cause of his persevering, with resignation to to the will of God, in his heavy trials and of looking forward to his last hour with joyful confidence. And you, poor souls in purgatory! Who is it that brings you more consolation and succor in your sufferings than the priests? Perhaps your relations, friends and acquaintances? Without doubt they pray for you, sometimes have a mass said for you, offer up an indulgence, a good work for you; but those to whom you are most indebted are the priests; they remember you daily in the holy sacrifice of the mass and many times apply its fruit exclusively to you; they offer up for you numerous indulgences, which they gain by offering the sacrifice of the mass and by various exercises of devotion and good works. Thus I can say with truth and with justice that the priests are a light, because they console and rejoice both the living and the dead.

PERORATION.

Acknowledge, then, how much you owe to the priests who are *the salt of the earth and the light of the world.* They are *the salt of the earth,* because they cleanse you from sin, preserve you from it, and render you acceptable to God; they are *the light of the world,* because they announce to you the word of God, and instruct you in what you are to believe and do in order to work out your salvation. Return thanks to God therefore from the bottom of your heart, that he has given you priests who do so much good for you and from whose hands you receive what is necessary in order to gain heaven. Renew also the resolution to-day to be obedient to the priests and to employ the means of grace which they administer for your salvation. Listen willingly to the teachings and admonitions which they give you from the pulpit, in the confessional, and on all other occasions, and make them the rule of your life; attend mass on Sundays and holidays of obligation, and receive frequently the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist. And you, dear Father, who have so recently been ordained, remember to-day at your first holy mass, not only your parents, friends and benefactors, but all who are assembled

here on this your day of honor and jov, and reco· amend us in youf prayers to God, that we may constantly lead a holy life here below, and be numbered among the elect in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

THIRD SKETCH.

THE EXALTED DIGNITY OF PRIESTS; THE RESPECT, HONOR AND OBEDIENCE DUE TO THEM.

Honor God voith all thy soul; and give honor to the priests, — *Eccles.* **7:33.**

We are assembled here to-day to assist at the celebration of a newly-ordained priest's first mass. Many of you have never been present at a first mass, or if elsewhere, never in this church. If ever joy were appropriate and just, ours surely is on this day; it is a day of joy for the newly-ordained priest, who has at length attained the object of his ardent desire, for which he has been laboring for many years. It is a day of joy for brothers and sisters, who can now say, our brother is a priest of the Most High God. It would be a day of joy to his parents, had they lived to see this blessed day, but they have, we have reason to hope, already entered into the joy of the Lord. They are no longer among the living. It is also a day of joy for us, because there is one more who will break the bread to the little ones, and carry the work of salvation to thousands of Catholics in the field of his missionary labors. "Going therefore teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and, behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" *{Matt.* 28: 19, 20); such were the last words which our Lord and Saviour spoke to his Apostles; such was the great commission which he gave them before his return to his Father. The Apostles and their lawful successors, the bishops and priests, from that time up the present day have fulfilled their mission, and are doing so even now, and will continue to do so the end of time; they teach all nations, administer the sacraments in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, for the purification and sanctification of the faithfuhl; for our Lord is a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech; his priesthood dies not, but is renewed by his command from **ge-**

neration to generation; he singles out weak men to be the instruments of his grace; he invests them with the power of the Holy Ghost, in his name to announce the truth to men, to reclaim sinners from their evil ways, and to bless generations yet unborn. This day's celebration again proves that the priesthood of Christ dies not. That you may derive some benefit from this holy action, for the first time performed by the young priest before you, I shall speak—

I. Of the exalted dignity and excellence of the priesthood, and
II. Of the respect, honor and obedience due to the priests of the Church.

Part I.

There are, as you know, seven sacraments; you know, moreover, tnat a sacrament is an outward sign of an inward grace, instituted by Jesus Christ for the sanctification of mankind. One of these seven sacraments is Holy Orders, for it contains all things necessary to constitute a sacrament. It is an outward or visible sign, because it is performed by the imposition of 'the bishop's hands with the words which he pronounces. It is an outward sign of an inward grace, as is evident from the words of St. Paul to Timothy, in which he admonishes him to stir up the grace of God which he received by the imposition of his hands. It was instituted by Christ when at the Last Supper he ordained his Apostles priests in these words: "Do this for a commemoration of me."—*Luke* 22: 19. Here it was that Christ made his Apostles priests when he gave them power to do what he had done, to consecrate both species, to represent his body slain and his blood shed on the cross. This command refers only to priests, there being none present when it was given but the Apostles.

There are *two kinds ofpriesthood:*

(a.) *The interior.* This extends to all the faithful who have been baptized, but particularly to the just who have been anointed by the Spirit of the Lord, and by divine grace made members of the High-priest, Christ Jesus. "You are a royal priesthood," St. Augustine says. "Through faith, inflamed by charity, they (the people) offer sacrifices to God on the altar of their hearts." In these sacrifices are included those good and virtuous actions which are offered to the glory of God by a good intention. Hence, St. John says: "Jesus Christ hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom and priests to God and his Fathei."—*Apoc.* 1: 5, 6. In like manner **St** Peter says: "Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual

house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, **accept*** able to God by Jesus Christ."—*I Pet.* 2:5. And St. Paul exhorts us thus: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living· sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service."—*Rom.* 12: 1. And the royal prophet says: "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."—*Ps.* 50: 19. In this sense all the faithful are priests, who can and must offer sacrifices to God.

(£.) The exterior. I do not intend to speak of the interior, but of the exterior priesthood, which prerogative does not extend to all the faithful, but only to a certain privileged class who devote themselves entirely and exclusively to God's holy service, and by the imposition of the hands of the bishops of the Church are appointed to perform the sacred functions of the holy ministry. It is certain that by the law of nature there were priests. Men perceived by their natural understanding that God, the Creator of the Universe, is the supreme Lord, and as such is to be honored; hence of necessity they had priests who attended to the service of God. We know that Cain and Abel offered sacrifices; we know that Noe offered a sacrifice after the deluge in thanksgiving; that Abraham and Jacob did the same: and St. Jerome, speaking of the traditions of the Hebrews, says that all the first-born males were priests. In the time of the written law the children of Israel had their priests who possessed great power and authority and enjoyed special privileges. God selected the tribe of Levi for the service of the temple and by an express law forbade them to have a share of the land, he himself being desirous to be their portion and inheritance; he made Aaron, the brother of Moses, his high-priest and the chief of the ministers of the Sanctuary.

(c.) But though the Jewish priesthood was honorable, and their power and authority great, it cannot be compared to the priesthood of the New Law. The power with which the Christian priesthood is invested is a heavenly power, exalted above that of the angels. This priesthood has its origin not in the Levitical priesthood, but in Jesus Christ, who was a priest, not according to the order of Aaron, but of Melchisedech. This High-priest, invested with supreme power and authority to grant pardon and grace, has left his power to the Church, to be employed by her ministers as it had been employed by him; a power limited, however, andattachedto the sacraments. To exercise this power in all those ecclesiastical functions pertaining to the divine offices, the sanctification of the faithful and the government of the Church, ministers •re appointed and solemnly consecrated, and this solemn conse-

cration is called Ordination, or the Sacrament of Holy Orders whereby men are made priests, interpreters, and heralds of God, commissioned by him, in his name, to teach mankind and to dispense the means of salvation. For this reason priests are justly called in Holy Writ *not only angels but gods,* holding as they do the place of God. Priests were always honored before all the people, even by the Gentiles; and in the New Law their power is great and their dignity most exalted, for the power with which they are invested of consecrating bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ and of remitting sin, is such as cannot be comprehended by the human mind nor equalled by anything either in heaven or on earth.

(æ.) Not only for the Apostles, but for the priests of all times, the words which Christ spoke to them remain in force: if You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;" it remains true for ever that in his Church only he who is sent has power, and only he can send to whom all power is given in heaven and earth. But as no one can take this power upon himself but he that is called by God, as was Aaron, such a one God does not acknowledge, even though he should prophesy and work miracles; so the people can neither choose their pastors nor invest them with power and authority because man cannot give what he has not. Christ came from heaven upon earth to become and to remain for ever the spiritual centre and fountain of life. The Apostles were not chosen by the congregations to whom they preached the gospel, but were sent by Christ: they appeared among them as divinely authorized teachers, channels of grace, and ministers of the sacraments. This divinely instituted order cannot be changed. Is it not mankind that is to be cleansed from sin, taught, strengthened and sanctified? Who has ever heard of sheep choosing their shepherd, or a child the mother of whom it is to be born? No; as it is Christ who chooses his priests, and the priests represent the person of Christ, the natural consequence is—

Part II.

That the highest honor, veneration, respect and obedience are due to the priests of the Catholic Church, for the Holy Ghost says: *Honor God with all thy soul, and give honor to the priests,* and after saying to the children of Israel that if they did not knowhow to decide difficult and doubtful questions they were to go to the priests and do whatsoever they should say, God added: "He that shall be proud and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest, that man shall die." As God wished that the priests

of the Old Law, who were only the foreshadowers of the priests of the New Law, should be honored so much, as he commanded the children of Israel to obey their priests under the penalty of death, how great must be the veneration with which Christ wished his priests to be honored, who are the representatives of his own divine person? How great a punishment will those incur who dare to rebel against and despise the priests of the Church.

i. That great respect, honor and obedience are due to a Catholic priest you will perceive from the double power and authority with which he is invested by Christ.

(a.) He has power over the mystical body of Christ, which is the Church, the members of which are the faithful, and over his true and real body in the Blessed Eucharist. Concerning the first power, Christ said to his J\.postles, and in them to all priests: "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven," and again: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained." This is the great power and authority to forgive all sins whatsoever, even though they may be as numerous as the sands on the sea-shore and as red as crimson. The only condition is that the sinner must sorrowfully confess his sins and resolve not to commit them any more, and the moment the priest pronounces these powerful words: "I absolve thee from thy sins," all his sins are forgiven. These words are of such power and efficacy that the chains by which the devil held the sinner captive are burst asunder; the soul that was blacker than coal becomes whiter than snow; he who was a slave of the devil becomes a child of God; he who was on the point of being cast into hell has again a right to heaven; a sinner has become a saint, and if he should die that moment his soul would be admitted into heaven.

(3.) Let us go a step farther; the power of the priest is not confined to the mystical body of Jesus Christ, but extends also to his real body, for he has power to consecrate and offer it to the heavenly Father, to receive it himself, and to distribute it to the faithful. He pronounces over bread and wine, in the person of Christ, these words: "This is my body, this is my blood," and immediately the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ who descends as true God and true man from his throne in heaven upon the altar, and is really present under the appearance of bread and wine. It is impossible therefore to

conceive a dignity more exalted, or functions more sacred than those of a priest of the Catholic Church. Not only all Israel, but the whole world, was astonished when at the command of Josue the sun stood still; must not our astonishment be still greater when we see the true Son of Justice, Jesus Christ, at the command of the priest descend from heaven upon our altars and honor us with his real presence, not only once, but as often as the priests offer the tremendous sacrifice of the mass? It certainly was a great miracle when at the words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word" (*Luke* i: 38J, Jesus Christ descended from his royal throne in heaven into the pure womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. But is it not also a miracle, and a far more stupendous one, when at the words of the priest: "This is my body, this is my blood," the same divine Word descends and becomes, as it were, flesh again? This miracle made an ancient Father of the Church exclaim: "O exalted dignity of priests, in whose hands, as in the womb of the Virgin, the Son of God is made flesh." And yet there are people who do not honor the priests of the Most High God, who have power to do what he has done, to consecrate and to offer his body, to grant pardon and grace, and to reconcile heaven and earth. But Christ says: " He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." Through the ministry of the priests of the Church you were freed from original sin, made children of God and members of his Church, out of which there is no salvation. The priests are your spiritual fathers, your guides in the way of salvation; your piety, therefore, should move you to give them the honor, respect and obedience due to them as representatives of God upon earth.

PERORATION.

Let us accompany with our prayers this newly-ordained priest who ascends the altar for the first time, that the Lord may strengthen him in his exalted and difficult vocation. What St. Paul said to his beloved disciple Timothy I also say to him: " Negle> (, not at all times to stir up the grace which you have receiveo at your ordination." And whilst you, my dear brother priest, offer your first mass, pray for our mother the holy Catholic Church, that the Lord in his omnipotence may command the tempest and the boisterous sea, and that in his mercy for the sake of the weak, he may shorten the days of tribulation. Pray for the successor of St. Peter, our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII., advanced in years, but young in vigor and strength. Pray foi youi parents, your brothers and sisters, pray

for your relatives, your friends and benefactors, pray for all who are assembled within the walls of this church, and in conclusion I would request you to pray also to Almighty God for me. When Jacob had wrestled with an angel all night, he said to him: "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me." Likewise we will not let you go, angel of God, unless you bless us all, and we in turn will bless you and pray for you, that your ministry may prove a source of everlasting blessing to yourself and others. Pray, Father, give us your blessing.

A PRIEST'S GOLDEN JUBILEE.

SKETCH.

A TWO-FOLD HONOR IS DUE TO PRIESTS.

Let the priests that rule well be esteemed, worthy of double honor.—*I. Tim.* 5: 17.

I see the whole congregation in joyful commotion to-day; I see this church gracefully and artistically adorned, and filled with devout worshippers; I see a large concourse of priests, many of whom have come from a great distance in order to participate in the feast of to-day. Whose feast is it? It is the feast of a priest to whom the words of my text may be fully applied: *Let the Priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honor.* During fifty years has this priest labored in the care of souls, and during all this long time there has not been a day on which he was not sincerely and honestly solicitous to fulfil his duty as a pastor, according to the will of God. He is a priest who has preached the word of God with unabated zeal according to the admonition of the Apostle: "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, entreat, rebuke with all patience and doctrine;" a priest who recognized it to be his most important duty to reconcile sinners with God and conduct the faithful to heaven; a priest whose heart's desire it has been to dry the tears of the unfortunate, to console the afflicted, and to succor the poor, the widows and the orphans.

But I fear to offend the modesty and humility of our reverend father by occupying myself longer with his personal labors. He has, as he has repeatedly said, not arranged this feast for his own honor, but simply to return thanks to God for all the graces which he has bestowed upon him during his long priestly career. But although our reverend father claims no honor for himself, I adhere to my text: *Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honor.* Why should not priests who rule well be esteemed

worthy of double honor? The answers to this question shall ? the subject of our meditation to-day. I therefore say: Priest that rule well deserve a twofold honor on account of the two· fold benefit which they bestow upon mankind, for they—

I. Educate,, and
II. Perfect mankind.

Part I.

In our days it is often said, that priests do not educate and enlighten the people, that they are enemies of education. Is this true? I answer: Yes, and no, according to the sense in which the word education is accepted. The priests are—

1. *Enemies of a false education.*

(a.) An old-fashioned citizen in his travels entered a hotel; it was Friday, and dinner was just served. He sat down to the table, at which many other guests were seated, and asked what he could have to eat. Roast beef, ham, roast veal, turkey, chicken, and duck, was the answer. But, the gentleman replied, it is Friday; I am a Catholic, and want fish and eggs. He had scarcely expressed himself thus when all the guests cast a contemptuous look at him and whispered to one another, "What an ignoramus, he is fifty years behind the time." Therefore, if any one *observes the rules of his religion and the precepts of the Church,* if he keeps the fast days, goes to confession and communion frequently during the year, says grace before and after meals, he is an ignoramus, a man without education. But, let me ask, is any education required in order to be enabled to transgress the laws of the Church? Cannot the greatest simpleton do this? And how does Christ judge those who do not observe the laws of the Church? Does he perhaps say: If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as an educated man? No, he says: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."—*Matt.* 18: 17.

(ȯ.) In our days there is a multitude of people who call themselves Christians, but *ivho deny the divinity of Christ.* Christ is no longer the Son of God, and, therefore, true God, but a mere man, the wise man or philosopher of Nazareth. If we ask such a denier of Christ how he knows that Christ is not true God, either he will not be able to answer, or he will appeal to the learned and say that science has advanced so much that belief in the divinity of Christ cannot co-exist with it. We are expected, then, to believe these learned men who change their opinions a hundred

times and disagree with one another, whose whole moral conduct is generally anything but praiseworthy, and who not unfrequently embrace the Christian faith when they come to die—we are expected to believe these learned men rather than the Apostles, the holy Fathers, and the millions of martyrs, who believing in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, wrought numberless miracles and shed their blood for their faith; we should believe these learned men rather than all the Christians who for more than eighteen hundred years have adhered to the belief in Jesus Christ, and in this belief have found solace and peace in life and in death! Would this be reasonable? Would this be a sign of education?

(é.) A great many people go still further in their unbelief in our days; they no longer *believe in a God,* in the immortality of the soul, in heaven and hell; they even make no distinction between virtue and vice. In this complete unbelief they imagine education to consist. Of such a learned man I should like, among other questions, to ask this one only: "If there is no God, whence are heaven and earth?" To this question he will in the end reply: "Heaven and earth have come of themselves." A fine answer. As if any one would tell you: "This church in which we are now assembled was not built by the hands of men, but came of itself. The stones moved themselves out of the quarry and laid themselves together in the walls; the steeple, little by little, grew out of the earth, the altars and pictures of the saints were made of themselves and placed themselves where they are." If one were to speak thus to you in earnest, would you not think him a madman, a fit subject for a lunatic asylum? Shall we then recognize those infidels as educated men who tell us that heaven and earth were made of themselves? Should we first deny our sound reason and believe the greatest nonsense in order to be able to lay claim to the title of educated people?

These are the opinions which many of the so-called enlightened men of our day have of education; it consists in maintaining a hostile attitude towards the Church, in contempt for the precepts of the Church, in the denial of the divinity of Christ, and even in complete unbelief. If this be education, we priests do not belong to the educated class, for such an education is an abomination in our eyes; we have been at war with it for more than eighteen hundred years, and shall be at war with it until the end of time.

2. *Friends of true education.* I do not speak here of religious education, which consists in a thorough knowledge of the Christian religion, her mysteries, doctrines and commandments; we priests admit the full rights of profane education, which chiefly regard the temporal life; we appreciate education as it is aspired

to in our schools. Priests have at all times promoted this education and according to the testimony of history have acquired considerable fame as the result of their labors in this respect.

(a.) In the course of time Christianity was propagated among the nations of the earth; some of these people, such as the Greeks and Romans, were already highly educated, but others, as the Germans and Sclaves, ranked low in the scale of culture. What did the priests do among those cultured nations? Did they work against the already existing education? By no means. They endeavored rather to ennoble and perfect it. They purified art and science of all that was offensive and erroneous and taught the learned and educated, after they had embraced Christianity, to employ their knowledge for the glory of God, the service of religion and the welfare of their fellow-men. And how did the priests conduct themselves in the conversion of nations that were in a savage condition and utterly uneducated? They instructed them little by little in all the branches of science which are requisite for an orderly, happy life. Who, for instance, transformed the ancient Germans from savage tribes into moral men? The priests of the Church. The Christian religion had no sooner gained a foothold in Germany than everything assumed a brighter aspect; the Germans accustomed themselves to stationary habitations, built cities and villages, devoted themselves to agriculture, to the breeding of cattle, and to the useful trades, and many of them acquired in the parochial, monastic and cathedral schools, which were established and conducted by priests, not only ordinary information, but they also made considerable progress in the arts and sciences.

(£.) What the priests have done in the earlier centuries they still do to-day. The annals of the faith report how the missionaries who labor among pagan nations do not content themselves with preaching the gospel, but labor in the cause of universal education. Thus the missionaries in Africa instruct the poor negroes, not only in reading and writing, but also in agriculture and trades, and teach them to live as men. Thus they can say with the Apostle: "We became all things to all men, that we might save all."—*I. Cor.* 9: 22.

(c.) What do rhe priests do in civilized countries, for example, in America, where great efforts are made for the education of the people, and for the cultivation of the arts and sciences? Do they show themselves to be enemies of education, or are they indifferent to it? He who would assert this would be guilty of a great falsehood. And how zealously the priests labor in the parochial schools. Many visit them daily and assist the teachers in every possible way so that education may thrive. What shall I

say of our numerous colleges throughout the United States, built and conducted by priests almost exclusively? Judge for yourselves, whether it is true that priests are enemies of education, keeping the people in ignorance instead of enlightening them. The history of eighteen hundred years convinces us of the falsity of such an assertion and testifies before the whole world that in the education of the people and in the cultivation of the arts and sciences none have done more than the priests; therefore, honor the priests, for they educate the human race—not according to the spirit of the world, it is true, not according to the principles of infidels and free-thinkers, but according to the unalterable principles of Christianity, teaching what is necessary and expedient for us in order to obtain a blessing for the present and the future life. Honor the priests, for it is they that not only educate, but also *refine* mankind.

Part IL

The refinement of which I speak consists in this, that **we become** morally good; that we hate, detest and avoid all that is evil, love and practice all that is good and pleasing to G-od. All well-disposed, honest-minded people desire this refinement, **because** on it depends their temporal and eternal welfare. By what means is this refinement obtained?

i. *Not by education alone.* In our days the people are most solicitous for education. Education, nothing but education, is the watch-word of our reformers. Now, has education really the power to make moral, just and honest men? Let us question—

(a.) *History.* The ancient Greeks and Romans were highly educated nations, among whom the arts and sciences flourished, but what was their moral life? Was it good and praiseworthy? Just the reverse. St. Paul, who knew them personally, describes them as "filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness, full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity, whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, foolish, dissolute, without affection, without fidelity, without mercy."—*Rom.* 1: 29, 30, 31. A renowned historian says that savage nations in regard to morality were as angels compared to the cultured Greeks and Romans. From this you see that education is insufficient to refine men.

(J).} Experience. Let us glance at our own time. Education has made great progress in the last thirty or forty years. The public schools teach a great many things; we have institutions for all

branches of knowledge and countless things have been invented which are an honor to the intellect of man. But have the people become better in consequence of this progressive education? They have become wiser, more learned, but no better, rather worse. How simple was the life of the majority of the people thirty or forty years ago! They followed their calling with a view to earn an honest livelihood; they dressed plainly, in keeping with their station in life, were frugal, and avoided expensive pleasures; fidelity and honesty prevailed, family relations were observed, the laws were obeyed, temporal and spiritual authorities respected. But now all things are changed. We indulge at present in extravagance which knows no bounds; all desire enjoyment; no one will hear of retrenchment and self-denial. Disobedience and rebellion against existing laws are the order of the day; the vice of impurity reigns supreme, and crimes of every description have become so numerous that the courts have scarcely time to dispose of all the cases that are brought before them. The jails, work-houses and penitentiaries are crowded with people, and it is a fact that the so-called educated people are to be found in larger numbers in them than those that know not how to read and write. In the larger cities moral depravity is greater than it ever was in the times of degenerate paganism. Now, when we see how education has progressed, and morality retrogressed, who can assert that education is **able to** promote probity and virtue among men?

(c.') Reason. Education according to its nature cannot refine, because it only enlightens the understanding, but allows the heart to lie fallow; education without a religious foundation promotes the corruption of morals. The educated have more necessities than the uneducated, but necessities want to be satisfied. Since this frequently cannot be done in a lawful manner, a man without religious principles does not dread crime, if he can gratify his desires. Education also aids sin, because it teaches man how to gratify his passions and to execute his criminal projects. I do not deny that an uneducated man can also be wicked and corrupt, but he is not as cunning and dangerous as the educated man. Do not permit yourselves to be led into error by people who talk so much about education and by means thereof desire to reform the world. Education has never made any man good, and never will.

3. Nor by human taws. Far be it from me to detract from the necessity and utility of these laws; without them human society could not possibly exist, but this much is certain that all these laws are not capable of making truly good and virtuous. **Why?**

(a.) *Because they refer exclusively to exterior actions,* but leave the interior man untouched. They prohibit, for instance, murder, robbery, theft, but not hatred, enmity, envy and sinful desires for the goods of others, lhey can only control the outward actions, because no human judge can look into the heart.—*De internis non judicat praetor.* If, therefore, one does nothing sinful exteriorly, he perfectly satisfies the human law and is a good ci· tizen, but may be at the same time a very corrupt man as re· gards his mind.

\bi) *Because they lack universality.* They only forbid such actions as are especially opposed to the common good, but let others no less immoral go unpunished. Thus, *e. g.,* no civil law forbids cursing and blaspheming, the unnatural sin of effeminacy, the base vice of fornication and adultery, the neglect of divine worship on Sundays and holidays. And what shall I say of the Chris- tian virtues, *e. g.,* of the virtues of humility, patience, love of enemies, of charity ? Where is the civil law that imposes the ex- ercise of these virtues as a duty? The human law, therefore, makes no great demands on us, and if our justice does not extend further than this law prescribes, we are anything but morally good men.

(c.) Finally, because they offer no sufficient motive for their obser- vance. Whit can human power do in order to induce men to ob- serve its laws? It can impose upon them only temporal punish- ments, such as paying a fine, loss of liberty, and death. But are these punishments sufficiently efficacious to deter men from the transgression of the laws? Evidently not. Frequently it can be reckoned upon with certainty that the unlawful action will re- main unknown, and that consequently the threatened punishment need not be feared. Sometimes the temporal authority lacks the power to punish the violator of the law, as is often the case in revolutions. If a man be in the heat of passion, he does not re- gard the severest punishment which awaits him on account of the violation of the law. There are also fanatics who consider the most damnable crimes heroic deeds, as, for example, assassi- nation, etc., and look upon it as a glorious thing to be executed. Human laws therefore cannot make man better.

3. *Religion alone can do this with its means of salvation, the ad- ministration oj which is committed to the priests.* I shall mention onlv two :

(a.) The word of God. This forbids all that is evil, not only in word and deed, but also in thought and desires. It tells us : "Thou shalt not kill but it also tells us : "Whosoever hateth his **bro-**

ther, is a murderer."—Z *John* 3: 15. It not only tells us: "Thou shalt not commit adultery," but also, "Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."—*Matt.* 5: 28. It designates love as the first and greatest commandment, and obliges us to extend our love even to our adversaries and enemies. *(Matt.* 5, 44.) It does not hold up to us a virtuous man, not even an angel, but God himself, and calls upon us in all our actions to take him for our model: "Be you perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."—*Matt.* 5: 48. Now if we make the word of God the rule of our life, it is evident that we are truly good and virtuous, not only exteriorly, in our words and actions, but also interiorly, in our thoughts. The word of God holds out to us the strongest motives for it. It tells us of a God, who is omnipresent and omniscient, a God who so loved us as to give his only Son for our redemption, a God who if we give our neighbor for his sake a cup of water does not allow it to go unrewarded, but who also demands an account of every idle word we speak. It promises to reward us with the eternal and unspeakable joys of heaven if we fervently and faithfully serve God, and threatens to punish us with eternal damnation if we spend our life in forgetfulness of him.

This is the word of God which we priests preach without ceasing. This word alone is able to make men better, for it shows them not only what they must do in order to become truly good and virtuous, but also powerfully stimulates them to do it courageously and constantly in spite of all obstacles. The history of eighteen hundred years proves that the word of God has made all nations who received it moral, and put a stop to their dissipations and vices. And if there are still good and upright Christians, it is due to the word of God. Take away this word containing all blessings, and with it the Christian faith, and you will see how peace, order and security of person and property will disappear from human society; how the passions will break through all barriers of right and law and bring forth vice of every description, and how men like furious beasts will tear and throttle one another. If you desire to have hell upon earth, let there be no priests to preach the divine word and preserve the Christian faith.

(i.) *The holy Sacrameuts.* It is the holy sacraments in particular that make people better, for they cleanse, sanctify and impart to us all the graces we need in order to serve God with fidelity, to perfect ourselves more and more and to obtain eternal salvation. Thus, it is *baptism* that purifies us from every stain of sin and transforms us into children of God and heirs of heaven* *confirmation* that strengthens us in the struggle against the ene-

mies of our salvation; *communion* that nourishes our soul and preserves our supernatural life; *penance* that again frees us from sin and reinstates us in the state of grace; *extreme unciion* that encourages consoles and strengthens us in our last illness; *holy orders* that sanctifies priests and invests them with power to apply to men the fruits of redemption; finally, *matrimony,* which gives to married people the grace to fulfil with fidelity the duties of their state of life. Now, all these graces which flow to men through the holy sacraments come to them through the hands of the priests, because it is only to them that Christ has given the power to administer the sacraments.

Thus, then, the priests perfect the people, for they preach to them the word of God, which infuses into their hearts a detestation for sin and a love for virtue, detaches their hearts from the goods of this world, and stimulates them to seek the things that are above; they administer to them the sacraments by which they are interiorly transformed and renewed, becoming members of Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost and receiving the assurance that after this short, fleeting, earthly life they will reign with the Triune God and his angels and saints for ever in **heaver** *1*

PERORATION.

Seeing to-day in your midst a priest who has been laborii ,g fifty years in the care of souls, what more can I say than repeat the words of the Apostle: *Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honor.* Yes, you who are members of this con gregation deem your good pastor worthy of double honor, **fo>** his long pastoral labors among you have been dedicated, **not** only to your education, but also to your perfection. Does lot the pulpit where he so often preaches the word of God, the al ar where he daily offers the sacrifice of the mass for the living a id the dead, the confessional where he reconciles sinners to Gt d, the school where he breaks the bread to little ones, the sick-bîd where he is a gentle and charitable comforter to the sufferii g and dying, nay, even his room where he establishes peace b > tween enemies and brings the erring back to the right path **and** where he daily implores the blessing and grace of heaven upon his parishioners—do not all these places bear testimony to th fact that he has had nothing so much at heart as to perfect men and lead them to their eternal destiny? Dear parishioners, honor, then, your good pastor, honor him not only by your words, but also by your deeds. Hold fast the holy faith which he **has** preached to you, preserve your Catholic disposition of mind, **and** walk according to the precepts of the holy faith. You who **are**

assembled here to day, honor the priests and obey them with a willing· heart. Believe me, after all, no one has your interest more at heart than your priests, and if you scrupulously obey them, you will never regret it; the thought, "I have always obeyed my priest/' will be a sweet consolation to you in your dying hour.

May your good priest now raise his hands to invoke upon you heaven's choicest blessings; may he ascend the altar, and during the holy sacrifice of the mass present our necessities before the throne of God, that we who have assembled in this church to-day to celebrate his golden jubilee, may hereafter meet in heaven, and, united with Jesus Christ, the High-priest, and all his elect, celebrate an everlasting Jubilee. Amen.

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